

Parent Participation in Early Years settings in Northern Ireland:

Implications for Policy and Practice

by

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*A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy*

May 2018

I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000 words

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Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been the most challenging and altering experience of my career. I would like to express my gratitude to my two supervisors, Professor Diane Hazlett and Doctor Jackie Lambe, for their guidance and support throughout this process - it has been very much appreciated.

I would like to thank Siobhan Fitzpatrick, CEO Early Years, for taking a chance on this study when others wouldn't. I would also like to thank the staff of both Rainbow Sure Start and Toybox project for their time, support and knowledge. Finally a massive thank you to all the parents who gave so generously of their time to the interviews - your insights are the foundation for this study.

Special thanks to my mum for her never-ending love, support, guidance and patience (including dog-sitting and ironing) during this period - and to the rest of my family and friends for their love and support - we got there in the end guys!

Finally to those who have gone before - this is dedicated to the three of you.

Abstract

Parent Participation in Early Years settings in Northern Ireland: Implications for Policy and Practice

This study examines parental experience of 'participation' within Early Years (EY) settings in Northern Ireland. With these services designed to ensure improved short and long term outcomes for the child (HM Treasury, 1998) and society, parents have been designated by policy as the primary agents of such outcomes (DHSSPS, 2009; DE, 2012a) as a consequence of their EYS involvement.

With a stated acknowledgement of the lack of 'robust assessment' of service user involvement in this context to date (Perry, 2016), this study aims to bridge that gap by exploring and analysing experiences of parent 'participation' across three cohorts in this specific region of UK: Northern Ireland. Driven by regional economic, social and educational policies focussed on the regeneration of NI following a prolonged period of political unrest and deprivation (NIE, 2016b), Early Years education is promoted as a guarantor of such regeneration with parent involvement a key component. These parent cohorts are derived from NI EY services in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

This study consists of two phases: i) the identification of the key legislative and policy drivers of parent participation to inform the formulation of key themes for discussion with study recruits and ii) the collection and analysis of recruit experiences based on the themes identified.

Analysis of these findings indicates that parents experience involvement rather than participation in EY services. This is not a concern for parents and there was a consistent report of a lack of interest in becoming involved in this way. The primary driver of parental involvement is self-identified need, either their own or that of their child, with negligible interest in involvement as a means to securing educational input for their child. There is mixed evidence of ideation on direct parent involvement in EY services as essential. These findings call into question the current policy-driven paradigm of parent participation and its political support.

Abbreviations

CGT = Constructivist Grounded Theory

CP = Childcare Partnerships (Northern Ireland)

CYPSP = Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

EA = Education Authority

EY = Early Years

EYS = Early Years service

NI = Northern Ireland

NIE = Northern Ireland Executive

SLT = Speech and Language Therapy

SP = Service Provider

SPs = Service Providers

SS = Sure Start

SU = Service User

SUs = Service Users

TB = Toybox

TESS = Traveller Education Support Service

TYOP = Two Year Old Programme

NIPPA = Northern Ireland Pre-school Playgroup Association

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Word Count: 5,617

1.0 Specifying the research focus

The main focus of this study is to analyse reports of actual parent experience of participation in Early Years (EY) and to match this with the current, and supporting historical, policy and legislation driving it in order to identify potential gaps in policy implementation and address accordingly.

1.1 The Study Aim

The aim of this study is to undertake a scoping exercise to determine parental experiences of ‘participation’ in Early Years services in Northern Ireland.

1.2 Rationale for the study aim

Parental involvement in the early years development of their child has been shown to be a guarantor of positive outcomes for the child (Siraj-Blatchford et al ,2002). As a consequence, Early Years services actively seek to involve parents in their services alongside the children in order to ensure these positive outcomes (NIE, 2016b). Early Years education has been identified, at policy level, as a key driver of Northern Ireland’s economic, social and cultural regeneration (NIE, 2016a) and parents as primary agents of improved outcomes for their children in this educational period (NIE, 2016b).

With Early Years education such a prominent driver of NI’s regional regeneration, it is of concern that the Department of Education’s policy document *Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning* (DE, 2012a) of 2012 highlighted a lack of evaluation of Early Years services, including parent involvement, in Northern Ireland until that point. This document announced the introduction of an area-based inspection process to all DE funded EY services and a review of how these services target barriers to learning (DE, 2012a). In spite of this, it was reported, in 2016, that the Department of Education collected limited data on participants in these services and it was concluded, therefore, that robust assessment of service effectiveness was not possible (Perry, 2016, p4).

Given the reported lack of service evaluation (DE, 2012a) and a recognition of failure to collect comprehensive data to determine the effectiveness of state-funded EY services (Perry,

2016), it was of interest to read the DE's consultation document for the *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027*. Driven by the Children's Services Cooperation (NI) Act 2015, the document stated an intention to develop the new CYP strategy based on the principles of 'participation, partnership' and 'co-design' (NIE, 2016b) with children, young people, parents and carers as well as statutory authorities and services. However analysis of the document indicates that, whilst citing 'engagement with a wide range of parents, guardians and carers on the development of the Strategy' (NIE, 2016b, p24), this engagement actually consisted of 3 focus groups, involving 29 participants, and an online survey with 236 respondents. Given that Sure Start services in NI recorded over 32,000 children registered with this single service alone (RSM McClure Watters, 2015) (cited in Perry, 2016, p4), it is suggested that the DE's claim of wide-ranging 'engagement' with parents and carers is overstated.

In conclusion, a gap was identified i) in our understanding of how parents as service users of EY services, were actually experiencing the 'engagement', 'participation' and 'partnership working' referenced in the policy documents described within this educational context; and ii) how such experience was perceived to impact on outcomes for both parent and child. With recent study findings regarding the lack of robust collection and analysis of such information, alongside the current political impasse in NI governance, it was considered that such a study was both essential and timely in order to inform the ongoing development of relevant EY policy.

1.3 Rationale for the research focus

The decision to focus on the parents' perspective is driven by the researcher's professional background as a paediatric Speech and Language Therapist (SLT). Fifteen years clinical experience led the researcher to recognise the reliance of the therapeutic process on the parent as a purveyor of therapeutic techniques and as a means to improved therapeutic outcomes for the child. The researcher was interested in determining the parental perspective of such involvement in order to understand how and whether such involvement could be better utilised to improve both therapeutic outcomes and child and parent experience of Speech and Language Therapy.

With SLT provision in UK historically based on the medical model, there has been a recent shift to a social model of service provision. This change was adopted in order to better

understand and address the communication needs of any individual (RCSLT, 2009). It is implemented using a 4-level, tiered approach of universal, targeted, specialised or highly specialist services depending in individual need (RCSLT Wales, 2017). However the role of the parent within this dynamic remains relatively underexplored or understood. As recently as 2017, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy stated ‘that more than two thirds of [SLTs] reported that parents and carers had been effectively involved in decision-making regarding the support their family received’ (RCSLT, 2017, p5). Information outlining how parents were involved in this decision-making or their perspectives on these experiences, as an indication of how effectively they felt that they were involved, was absent.

In 2010, having conceived this research project, the researcher was interested in examining parent perspective in a context in which SLT was delivered using a social model. This interest was driven by the fundamental belief in communication, Speech and Language Therapy’s *raison d’être*, as a social activity dependent on more than one protagonist with a recognition that a range of factors, internal and external to each individual, contribute to that activity. The researcher felt that a service provision model which recognises the multi-factorial complexity of communication, and takes an holistic approach to the individual in order to manage any issues, would be effective in ensuring that therapeutic intervention is client-centred and therefore more likely to address need (RCSLT Wales, 2017). The researcher then sought to identify a service provision context which adopted such an approach. It was recognised that such a context would provide a service driven by a key set of implementation policies and protocols. In this way, it would be possible for the researcher to compare actual parent experience of involvement with policy-defined and -recommended implementation of such involvement.

Sure Start, the Early Years flagship programme, which sought to ‘break the cycle whereby disadvantaged children relived their parents’ experiences of poor education, physical ill-health and poverty’ (Melhuish & Hall, 2007, p3) by bringing together quality services for children under four and their parents including Speech and Language Therapy provision, appeared to be such a suitable context since parents were to be involved ‘in the design and working of the programme’ (SSU, 1998, p37) (cited in Melhuish & Hall, 2007).

In the initial scoping phase of this study the researcher met with a range of NI Sure Start services and staff to outline the original parameters of the study. During these discussions,

Sure Start staff raised concerns regarding parental recognition of SLT-specific intervention as a consequence of language development and support strategies being embedded across all EY activities and by all EY staff. In considering this issue, alongside her emerging knowledge of EY policy and their stated role of parents within that service delivery context, the researcher decided to make a number of revisions to the original conceptualisation of this research study. These revisions had a direct effect on the positionality of the researcher:

- i. The study would be positioned within the arena of Early Years services in order to facilitate the desired comparison between policy-driven parent involvement strategy and its implementation and actual lived experience from the parent perspective. This is a context which the researcher had some basic awareness of through her professional role as a paediatric SLT working mainly within a UK-based hospital setting. The researcher had no direct personal experience of EY services. As a consequence of this limited experience, it was further recognised that the researcher's knowledge of EY education-focussed policy and legislation was negligible;
- ii. The parental experience to be examined would be that of involvement in EY services, rather than a given SLT service, in order to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of parent involvement policy and to examine the perceptions of such involvement by parents. The researcher is familiar with the concept of parent involvement within the context of her own clinical practice and has extensive experience of working in partnership with parents in the therapeutic dynamic. It was considered that parallels could be drawn between the therapeutic and educational contexts and that the researcher's experience would inform her data gathering and analysis skills in the study.

In conclusion, the researcher positioned herself as an 'outsider' in relation to the context of Early Years education and parent involvement in the educational, rather than therapeutic, setting used in this study. It was recognised that she did have a number of professional skills, e.g. client interviewing for the purpose of case history taking, and personal attributes, e.g. empathy and listening skills, which were transferable to the research activity to be undertaken. The specific implications and outcomes of such positionality, for both the choice of methodology and the data gathering process employed, are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4 The Evolution of Early Years services

Early Years services are promoted as effective in ensuring routes out of poverty and reducing the risk of social exclusion for children and families because of a proven link between these outcomes and the 'positive effects of high quality preschool provision on children's intellectual and social behavioural development' (Sylva et al, 2004, p2). This assertion is based on the accumulation of a substantial body of evidence indicating that 'the foundations of brain architecture are established in early life' as a consequence of a triad of components: genetic make-up, environmental conditions and individual experiences (NSCDC, 2008, p1). Any experience of 'adverse conditions in early childhood' risks low educational attainment, social exclusion and lack of economic wellbeing in later life (FaCS, 2004, p4). Preschool education has been identified as key to avoiding these outcomes (Walker, 2006) (cited in Fuller, 2010).

The positive impact of this input in the pre-school period can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. This and subsequent work has developed and refined thinking about EY services, their purpose and the nature of their content and provided a body of evidence linking intervention to improved outcomes.

Early work includes Margaret McMillan's 'open-air camps' in turn of the century 1900s London which allowed children, aged 3 months to 5 years, to '...run and work and experiment, sleep' and 'have regular meals' with recorded outcomes of improved weight gain and sleep patterns for them (McMillan, 1917, p52). Based on these outcomes, it was asserted that this approach was effective in ensuring 'a healthier and more vigorous people' (Dudley Burney & Eder, 1917) (cited in McMillan, 1917, p55).

In pre-WW11 London, Boyce advocated a child-centred approach when implementing a large-scale preschool project. This project sought to ensure that 'as difficulties were noticed, we tried to help the child over his problems' with the child and teacher working together to solve any problem (Boyce, 1936) (cited in Wood, 2008, p25).

The latter half of the twentieth century saw an increased focus on empirical research and a rise in very large scale programmes targeting infants and preschoolers. Project Head Start in USA was one such study developed by the Kennedy administration in response to their

recognition of poverty within specific ethnic sub-populations including the Hispanic, African American and Native American communities, in spite of the country's post-World War II affluence (Vinovskis, 2005). Whilst it originally adopted a multi-faceted approach, it increasingly focussed on preschool education. The programme's political value soared because of its specific focus on children living in poverty as it sought to:

'...make it possible for disadvantaged children to begin formal schooling on a par with their peers, by means of a comprehensive programme to meet their emotional, social, health and psychological needs...' (Schrag et al, 2004) (cited in Gray & Francis, 2007, p656).

The increasing focus on the educational rather than the child development component of the project was influenced by a belief in the need for children to have school preparedness. This attitude sat alongside a perception of children from deprived areas as lacking such preparedness (Vinovskis, 2005). Thus EY support was designed to cancel out 'deficiencies associated with poverty' (U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Labour and Public Welfare, 1964) (cited in Vinovskis, 2005, p49). In spite of concerns about programme quality (Zigler & Muenchow, 1994) (cited in Vinovskis, 2005,p92), it continues to run today.

A much smaller longitudinal project, Perry Pre-school study, examined the effects of pre-school education on African-American children from disadvantaged areas in USA. It has yielded results which indicate the lasting impact of attendance at preschool into high school for both cognitive development and behaviour. Longer term outcome measures have also indicated reduced rates of delinquency and adult crime with improved employment status and earning potential (Sylva & Pugh, 2005).

A similar but much bigger scale longitudinal comparative European study, the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study, examined the effects of preschool education (Sylva et al, 2004). They found that, compared to those children who did not attend preschool, those who did had enhanced all-round development at the point of school entry, with the duration of attendance and quality of the home learning environment key determiners of outcomes (Sylva & Pugh, 2005).

Whilst many of these studies have been criticised for variable programme quality (Zigler & Muenchow, 1994) (cited in Vinovskis, 2005) and small cohort numbers, and therefore questionable representativeness (Heckman et al, 2010), the political value of EY programmes, which focus on children in poverty, appears to have ensured their proliferation, resulting in the development, in the UK, of one of the most high profile EY programmes: Sure Start.

Sure Start was developed in response to the newly elected 1997 UK Labour government's decision to break with previous UK administrations' approach to Early Years as a private family matter. They identified a range of long term social and human capital benefits to supporting Early Years development. They suggested that, with appropriate investment, EY service provision and support would benefit both the wellbeing and human capital of the individual and have a cascade effect on the family and community structure around them as well as enhancing the individual's value, in terms of improving earning potential and reducing public services' and welfare cost, to the wider economy.

Over the period 1999-2002, £450 million was secured in order to roll out this new EY service, with Northern Ireland receiving £15 million from this budget. 250 Sure Start Local Programmes were to be set up in England. Service providers from across the country's 20% most deprived wards were invited to form partnerships, nominate lead agencies and submit bids. By 2003, 524 Sure Start Local Programmes were in operation in England (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2010).

In 2004 Sure Start Children's Centres were created in response to 'disappointing early evaluations of the impact of Sure Start Local Programmes and the findings of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project about the impact of good quality integrated education and care' (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2010, p17). Sure Start Children's Centres were the result of the rationalisation and mainstreaming of the Sure Start initiatives Early Excellence Centres and Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative. Sure Start Children's Centres were rolled out in three phases and shifted from a targeted service in the 20% most disadvantaged areas to universal coverage between the period 2008-10 (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2010).

This universal coverage was underpinned by the passing of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. This legislation placed Sure Start Children's Centres on a statutory footing and required local authorities in England to ensure that enough centres were available to meet local need (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2010). This universal coverage was reversed to targeted provision by the Coalition government in 2011 (DfE, 2011).

All the EY programmes referenced here have historically had a rather mixed approach to the role of parents within the EY dynamic. For example, Project Head Start, whilst advocating the involvement of parents, was developed in a culture which described parents as 'culturally deprived' (Vinovskis, 2005, p85) and more recent research has focussed on the participation of children in decisions regarding service design, delivery and evaluation (Maconochie, 2013). The next section will review the evolution of the role of the parent in the EY setting.

1.5 Parents and the Early Years

Parents are currently identified as key proponents in the optimal development of their child during the preschool period (Xin, 2016). They are designated by policy as '...the first educators and play a vital role in ensuring healthy outcomes, providing opportunities to play, encouraging learning and acting as advocates for their child's rights...' (NIE, 2016b). This policy-driven definition of the role of parents in this period of their child's life is based on three broad premises.

The first of these is that EY services are dependent on parents (or carers) to ensure the attendance of their children at the services or programmes provided. Linked directly to this is the second premise of parents as vehicles for the perpetuation of EY-driven developmental and educational aims for the child (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002). The third premise is that effective involvement by parents in EY services in order to ensure positive outcomes for the child, and avail of lifelong learning opportunities themselves, contributes to the reduction in the risk of poverty by providing such opportunities (HM Treasury, 1998; NIE, 2016a). All of these operate against a backdrop of state recognition of the economic benefit of female employment and their provision and promotion of childcare, in the form of EY services, as a suitable alternative to being a stay-at-home mum (HM Treasury, 2003).

1.6 Specifying the Role of the Parent

The conceptualisation of the parent as key in the development of the child is a long-standing one dating back several centuries: '...the new-born learns from the mother...' (Pestalozzi, n.d.) (cited in Schmid, 1997, p143). Whilst the import of this relationship was historically recognised but poorly defined, national UK government policy of the last twenty years has determined that it is a driver of and vehicle for child development and learning and thus the conceptualisation of the parent has evolved to incorporate this ideation.

As well as specifying a role for parents in the EY context, government has also sought to define the relationship that it has with parents in this context. This has been captured using various terminology including 'working with parents' (HM Treasury, 1998), 'enabling parents' (DfES, 2007b), to 'encourage and support parents' (DE, 2012a), 'to build and sustain community involvement' (DfE, 2010, p14), to 'ensure strong parental representation...on the advisory board' (DfE, 2010, p22), 'partnership working' (DfE, 2014, p5) and making '...sufficient provision' to meet the 'needs of parents, prospective parents and young children...in the local area' (DfE, 2013, p20). Whilst some of this terminology appears to allude to equal working partnerships, the overall impression created is one in which the state, and its EY service providers, appear as power holders able to facilitate support, encouragement, enablement and provision to parents. It is further suggested that this approach is not that far removed from that of the 'culturally deprived' parents era referenced by the US's Project Head Start and therefore places EY service providers at risk of facilitating 'power over' situations with parents.

1.7 Concept of the Child and the Early Years

The focus on the preschool period of a child's development as key to their success is based on the current conceptualisation of the child and childhood. Whilst subject to ongoing debate and change, the concept of the child has been emerging since the eighteenth century, from employee to student with needs specific to their chronological age and stage of development and rights 'rather than simply needs' (Hewett, 2001, p96) including the right to develop to the fullest and to participate in family, cultural and social life (UNICEF, 2012). It became the focus of Labour government policy in the late 1990s as a perceived route out of poverty and a guarantor of social inclusion (Churchill & Clarke, 2009). Early Years services, particularly

Sure Start, were developed to kick-start and support preschool development. These services were to be:

'...two generational, involving parents as well as children; non-stigmatising...; multi-faceted, targeting a number of factors...; persistent, lasting long enough to make a real difference; locally driven, based on consultation with and involvement of parents and local communities and culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of children and parents...' (Melhuish & Hall, 2007, p5).

However, both current and previous governments, with their EY policy-driven long term goals for children of educational attainment, extended human capital, paid employment and enhanced lifestyle, stand accused of adopting a 'future oriented perspective of well-becoming' rather than the child's current well-being (CYP, 2011, p7).

1.8 The Regional Context of Northern Ireland

The current policy context of Northern Ireland is impacted by a range of factors that result directly from its particular social and political history. With Early Years education proposed as a key strand in the regeneration of NI, consideration will now be given to these region-specific factors.

1.8.1 Conflict History, Poverty, Regeneration and Human Rights

In 2011 the devolved government of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive, a region emerging from thirty years of civil and political unrest, violence and deprivation (Heenan, 2011), and with the political capacity to determine the direction of its own social, educational, economic and cultural development based on the policy it develops, identified Early Years education and learning as a major strand of its Programme for Government (2011-2015) (NIE, 2011) to promote the economic growth of the region and tackle its poverty. It has continued to do this with subsequent policy (NIE, 2016a).

The first NI-specific factor shaping the development of any NI policy is the existence of areas of chronic multiple deprivation as a result of poor investment and regeneration. This has resulted in Northern Ireland being described as 'one of the most unequal societies in the developed world' (Heenan, 2011, p135). These deprivation levels set NI apart from the rest of UK, with child poverty rates described as being 'more than twice that in Scotland, England

and Wales' (Monteith et al, 2008) (cited in Horgan, 2012, p2). It has the highest percentage of households with children (34%), the national average is 28%, with more children within families and a higher proportion of 4+ children per family (Horgan, 2012). In 2012 it had twice the proportion of its population in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), compared to the rest of UK, with 26% of that population receiving it as a result of mental health issues (Horgan, 2012). These findings are more concerning when considered against the current backdrop of public spending cuts of up to 40% in Early Years provision (Sure Start) (BMJ, 2018).

A second local driver impacting NI policy development, is the emergence of a strong community and voluntary influence on service provision. This influence emerged as a result of the 25 years of direct Westminster rule which, whilst accessible to some sections of the NI community, was inaccessible to others (Morrison, 2001). Within those sections of the community, excluded from the formal state, alternative structures, developed by community and voluntary groups, emerged to bridge the gap of statutory services. However these agencies were state-funded (Acheson, 1995). This was counter-balanced by the state dependence on these agencies to provide services in areas inaccessible to the state (Acheson & Williamson, 1995). It is argued that, as a result of this balance, these agencies became powerful enough to influence the nature of service delivery and policy (Morrison, 2001). This historical situation has continued to evolve with the development of partnerships between the community and voluntary sector and devolved government which persist until today, particularly in relation to Early Years (Childcare Partnership NI, 2018), and the consequential opportunity to influence EY policy.

The third driver, with a rights-based approach to policy currently advocated in NI, is the lasting influence of Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) and the European Union (EU) on the region during its conflict period. In this way networks and alliances were developed with Europe during the duration of direct rule which left NI open to the influence of its policies and legislation, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The result of this has been the evolution of a policy-wide focus on applying a rights-based approach, with the NIE seeking to invoke the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). In particular the

following five Articles: Article 4 of UNCRC outlines the role of the state in ensuring that it makes adequate service provision to meet the needs of the child whilst Articles 5 and 27 place a duty upon the state to ensure that it supports the parent to meet the need of the child as its primary caregiver. Article 8 of ECHR recognises the rights of the individual to privacy whilst Article 10 of ECHR recognises the individual's right to freedom of expression.

In implementing all five Articles a tension exists for the state, within the family dynamic, in striking a balance between ensuring that the rights of the parents are upheld without jeopardising those of the child in their care. It is to be concluded from these UNCRC and ECHR Articles that every child has the right to expect the support of parents and families in order to facilitate their right to a safe and fulfilled life and that the state has a duty to ensure that that support to both child and, as an aid to the child, their parents and families occurs. As stated above, these themes have acted as policy drivers to influence child-centred NI policy, most recently, the *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* (NIE, 2016b) and led to the incorporation of a sixth outcome for children of 'living in a society which respects their rights' in the original Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016 (OFMDFM, 2006). This sixth strand persists in the most recent strategy for children and young people (NIE, 2016b).

In spite of such inclusion in policy relating to children and young people, it should be noted that, currently, the UK, including NI, has ratified the UNCRC, rather than adopted it in domestic law. As a consequence, UNCRC may only be invoked at the discretion of individual judges on a case-by-case basis and cannot be relied upon to claim infringements of rights currently within the UK (CYP, 2012). More recently the Commissioner for Children and Young People has outlined its statutory duty to 'safeguard and promote to rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland' (NICCY, 2018, p11) and requested that the all NI Government Departments report their progress on the areas for which they are responsible both individually and collaboratively.

Therefore the influence of the NI's particular social and political history, the evolution of its voluntary and community sector services and its strong human rights agenda have shaped NI EY policy in seeking to involve and work with parents in the pre-school setting.

1.8.2 The Specific Culture of Engagement in NI: Community Identity and Social Inclusion

In 1998, announcing the implementation of the Social Exclusion Unit, the then UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, defined social exclusion ‘as broadly covering those people who do not have the means, material or otherwise, to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life’ (Blair, 1998) (cited by Malin & Morrow, 2008, p21).

With the NIE focus on growing the economy and tackling social disadvantage, a *Delivering Social Change* framework (OFMDFM, 2012b) was implemented to ensure the cross-departmental working of education, health, employment and justice in the provision of co-ordinated support services to alleviate poverty and deprivation as well as upskilling the workforce. This has subsequently been reinforced by the passing of the Children’s Services Cooperation (NI) Act 2015 which outlines the legal requirement for ‘co-operation among certain public authorities and other persons in order to contribute to the well-being of children and young persons’ (HM Government, 2015).

Taking its lead from the original Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People (OFMDFM, 2006) and UNCRC, the *Delivering Social Change* framework highlighted the importance of early years development and the pivotal role of parents as part of that:

‘...families play a very important part of this. Indeed, parental influence is known to be one of the most significant factors in the life chances of children and young people...’ (OFMDFM, 2012a, p5).

With Early Years and Early Intervention as one of its five priority areas, the *Delivering Social Change* framework (OFMDFM, 2012b) sought to reduce social inclusion and poverty. This was not an original theme and reflected many of the core policies of the original 1997-2001 Labour administration.

One clear distinction between NIE’s *Delivering Social Change* framework (OFMDFM, 2012b) and central government policy is the framework’s recognition of an NI specific issue: the existence of a divided community which requires community-specific responses ‘in order to tackle the most intractable problems’ (OFMDFM, 2012b, p10). The document goes on to

suggest that the state cannot identify specific services alone and that ‘we need to engage fully with communities themselves and with people on the ground with operational experience, guided by international best practice’ (OFMDFM, 2012b, p10) whilst also recognising that ‘people’s needs tend not to fall into specific categories’ (OFMDFM, 2012b, p11). By making such suggestions the devolved government committed itself to the need to engage with individuals within each community in order to identify and alleviate issues dividing Northern Ireland and which are fundamental to its economic and social development. Having identified Early Years education and intervention as key to such advancement, and parents as essential in that process, the Northern Ireland Executive has made a key commitment to working in partnership to identify community-specific issues for parents as primary and ongoing educators (DE, 2012a).

1.8.3 The Travelling Community in NI

With the considerable change in NI’s population composition in recent years, we recognise that, alongside the two main traditions, there are other long-standing communities including Travelling community. Recognised as a distinct ‘racial’ group by the Race Relations Order (NI) 1997, the Travelling community is described as ‘a community of people commonly so called who are identified by themselves and by others, as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including historically a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland’ (Race Relations Order (NI), 1997) (cited in McVeigh, 2007, p20).

In 2001, The NI census reported that Travellers made up 0.10% of the NI population (McVeigh, 2007). Whilst concerns were raised about the ability of a nomadic community to be effectively represented by the census process, it is recognised that, whilst a relatively small community, it presents with all the complexity of a larger community.

With the devolved government’s legal and policy-driven obligation to ensure social inclusion, as described above, and it’s commitment to population education as route to regional posterity and regeneration, a taskforce was set up to examine the Travelling community’s complexities and specific needs with a particular focus to education. It reported a number of community-specific issues. These were that:

- i) Traveller children were significantly under-represented in take up of pre-school provision; and:

- ii) Traveller children's readiness to learn at the point of entry into primary school was generally less than that of settled children (McVeigh & Joyce, 2011).

As these issues exist against a background of low socio-economic status of the population (McVeigh & Joyce, 2011) which persist to the current day (Watson et al, 2017), community-specific targeted services were set up to begin to address this deficit. One such service is Toybox and it was considered important to this study to seek to understand the role of parents within this targeted EY service.

1.9 Research Emphasis

In conclusion, the emphasis of this research will be on identifying actual parent experience of 'participation' in EY services in Northern Ireland and to pose questions about how this corresponds with related policy recommendations in light of the current lack of analysis of parent involvement (DE, 2012a; Perry, 2016).

Recognising that perception of need leads to the provision of universal, targeted or specialist services (RCSLT Wales, 2017; NHSCT, 2015) depending on that level of need, it is the intention of this study to seek to examine parent experience at these three levels of service provision in order to compare experiences and to identify commonalities and differences across these experiences. By doing so, it is proposed that, with such strong political support for Early Years as a means to regional regeneration (NIE, 2011; NIE, 2016a) and the prominent role of parents within it, this research will challenge some of the assumptions upon which such support is based.

1.10 Conclusion: Parent Participation in Early Years services in Northern Ireland

With an initial interest in the role of parents within a therapeutic dynamic, this study has sharpened its focus on 'parent participation' in 'Early Years' services with a view to determining the reality of such participation in relation to its recommending policy. This research, therefore, seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i) How is the paradigm of participation in Early Years settings in Northern Ireland experienced and understood by parents?*

ii) What are the implications of that experience for all those involved in this paradigm (child, parent, service provider and policymaker)?

The following chapter examines the core concepts underlying this study: 'participation', 'parent participation in early years settings' and their related policy.

Chapter 2: An Emerging Paradigm of Parent Participation Word Count: 7,124

2.0: Introduction

This chapter will provide an analysis of the range of drivers which have and currently shape the paradigm of parent participation. Attention will initially be given to the construct of participation from an historical perspective. This will include an interpretation of it applied to the EY context: parent participation. Consideration will be given to the reported impact of the application of such a construct on EY service outcomes. The influence of education and economic national and regional policy in shaping this interpretation will be discussed. Several models of participation will be reviewed in order to identify one for use as a comparator with parent report of participation experiences to be gathered by this study. Finally, issues raised by these considerations will be reviewed and used to shape the formulation of interview questions for this study.

2.1 Participation: the Concept

The World Health Organisation defines participation as the 'involvement in life situations' (WHO, 2002, p10) of any individual. Described as 'an infinitely malleable concept' (Cornwall, 2008, p269), it has become associated with positive conceptions of health and wellbeing (Eriksson & Granlund, 2004), as the individual participates and exerts influence on decisions affecting him/her.

This study adopts the perspective that the capacity of an individual to participate requires a dynamic relationship between the individual and the range of factors that compromise 'life situations' as part of a 'fundamentally...interactive phenomenon' (Cobb, 1993, p250). It further recognises that, by applying an ecological framework to this concept (Snell-Johns et al, 2004), it is possible to map the influence of those factors from and across the levels of an individual's environment (individual, micro-, exo- and macrosystems) on this dynamic relationship and the individual's capacity to participate.

The literature supports this perspective with its clear suggestion of 'participation' as an 'interactive phenomenon' which is a complex multi-factorial process based on factors,

intrinsic (Ball, 1994) (cited in Malin & Morrow, 2004) (Crozier, 1997; Benapudi & Leone, 2003; Eriksson & Granlund, 2004; Cullen et al, 2016) and extrinsic (Mendez et al, 2009; Wigfall et al, 2007; Cullen et al, 2016) to the individual. One of these extrinsic factors, national UK government policy developed over the last twenty years, has led to the re-conceptualisation of the individual from citizen to service user and from service recipient to service participant based on the ideology that in 'an inclusive society...citizens have both rights and responsibilities' (Toward, 2011, p33).

With national and regional education, social and economic policy focussing on extending human capital and ensuring social inclusion through the provision of preschool education, the role of 'other' has become increasingly visible as a source of support to the child within the educational context:

'We have a duty to create a conducive environment and to provide the necessary tools and the mechanism to support people in their endeavours to better themselves.' (Mandela, 1997).

Whilst 'we' or 'other', in the education dynamic, has traditionally been identified as 'teacher', more recently policy has focussed on the parent as instrumental in their child's education (Crozier, 1997) with services provided to 'encourage and support parents in their role as first and ongoing educators' (DE, 2012a, p17).

2.2 Parent Participation in Early Years services: the evidence

Educationalists have long recognised the 'social nature' of learning and the importance of social relationships within that process. With his 'zone of proximal development', Vygotsky highlighted the importance of the calibre of adult guidance provided in the development of a child's learning (Vygotsky, 1978, p86) whilst Montessori blurred the traditional boundary between school and home by suggesting that school should be experienced as 'home' such that 'inhabitants of school constitute family' (Martin, 2016, p235).

The contribution to be made by parents has, however, been historically vaguely defined:

'...the endeavours of his parents should be put to him in the way of making acquaintance freely with nature and natural objects...' (Mason, 1886) (cited in Nutbrown et al, 2008, p37).

And whilst their role was acknowledged, parents were often historically regarded as requiring advice on the 'nurture and instruction' of children (De Bellaigue, 2015, p502) which was usually available only to those with 'a degree of economic security' (de Bellaigue, 2015, p507).

The twentieth century saw a development in the conceptualisation of parents, from having 'a poverty of ideas and experience' (Boyce, 1936) (cited in Wood, 2008) to being recognised, alongside their children, as making a contribution to the education of their children by approaches such as that of Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 1993). This conceptualisation of the parent continued to evolve throughout the twentieth into the twenty-first century with the greatest driver of recent times, in UK, the participation policy and legislation produced by its governments over the last twenty years. This was initiated by the 1997 Labour government as part of their democratic renewal and public service modernisation agenda (Martin, 2009).

These policy initiatives are shored up by research indicating that the pre-school learning period is the most important time for parents to be encouraged to engage in their child's learning (Hallgarten, 2000) with a positive correlation between such involvement and educational outcomes for the children clearly evidenced (Xin, 2016). One project regularly referenced in the literature in support of this assertion is Head Start. One of its reviews categorically stated that parent involvement enhances the programme's effectiveness (Task Force on Child Development, 1967) (cited in Vinovskis, 2005) in spite of concerns regarding the quality of service provision (Zigler, 1994) (cited in Vinovskis, 2005).

More recent studies conducted within Head Start projects indicate that a range of different methods of involving parents are used, including workshops, home visits, conferences, and newsletters, with varying impact (Koch, 2018). Other studies, set in different EY settings, suggest that whilst these services actively promote parental involvement, parents themselves reported low involvement level in terms of participating in specifically educational activities with their children (Kurtulmus, 2016). Further studies suggest that class-related differences in

parental beliefs relating to their parenting roles and development of the children's learning interest may contribute to these experiences (Yamamoto, 2015).

UK-based projects, such as Sure Start Children's Centres, and most prominently the Pen Green Children's Centre, have advocated strongly for the involvement of parents in supporting their children during this pre-school period. They have championed the 'triangle of care' approach in which parents, professionals and community work in partnership so that 'each partner has a proper role' whilst sharing 'a common purpose' in 'enabling children to enjoy a secure, warm and stimulating childhood...' (Ball, 1994, p9).

In spite of the political support for these projects, analysis of studies examining parent participation in Early Years services in the UK have provided mixed results. Coe et al (2007) examined four Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) in relation to engaging with families, particularly those described as 'hard-to-reach'. They concluded that 'parental decisions regarding Sure Start are the product of a complex interaction between numerous factors which may act as either barriers or facilitators to service utilization' (Coe et al, 2007, p447) and provided evidence to support this current study's perspective of 'participation' as a multi-factorial and complex process.

Melhuish et al (2008), in their large scale comparative study, reported statistically significant differences between Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) and non-SSLP areas in relation to better social development of the children, reduced negative parenting behaviours and better home learning environments for those attending SSLPs. This study lacks detail about the nature of parent participation or parent perception of that involvement.

Specifically examining the expectations of parents for themselves and their children in accessing a single Sure Start, Northrop et al (2008) reported that parental expectations were met with 'the first few contacts' influencing the pattern of their involvement subsequently (Northrop et al, 2008, p28). However the nature of their participation was unclear from this study.

Malin and Morrow (2008) cited evidence of parents involved as volunteers as well as some evidence of their involvement in decision-making and management of their respective Sure Start. However the authors concluded that, whilst there was a level of personal development

as a result of this form of involvement, there remained insufficient condition 'for increasing relationship power and contextual power for individual parents' (Malin & Morrow, 2008, p93).

MacNeill's evaluation study of a single Sure Start concluded that 'there was a lack of shared understanding of the nature of parent participation in all its facets and this undermined the efforts of parents and staff in the development of the programme' (MacNeill, 2009, p659). More recently there has been a call for undergraduate Early Years teachers to receive exposure and experiences related to family engagement as part of their academic preparation to better facilitate their actual parent involvement practices (Abel, 2014).

All these evaluations are considered in light of Lehoux et al's (2012) criticism of the methodological approaches adopted by participation studies. They suggest that these studies lack sensitivity to the psychological profile of the individual as they undertake the decision-making process to becoming involved. This sits alongside earlier work (Boot & Macdonald, 2006) which highlighted the issue of failing to seek specific information regarding how services were perceived by parents.

In summary, the literature indicates either a lack of evaluation of parent participation within EY studies, possibly due to methodological issues, or, for those specifically examining parent involvement, issues with the implementation of participation as a result of limited shared understanding of the concept by those involved. In spite of the mixed findings reported by studies of parent participation in EY settings, their political support, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland, has continued. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

2.3 Is it really Parent Participation?

Common to all these studies is a consistent lack of information regarding both the specific nature of parent involvement in EY services and parental ideation and perceptions which influence decision-making in becoming involved. As long ago as 2004, authors raised concerns about how EY services were recording and utilising parental opinion. Boot & Macdonald (2006) described one Sure Start centre evaluation process which sought to record parental satisfaction at the point of discharge. They suggested that 'parent views have an importance beyond that of recording a level of satisfaction with the service received' (Boot & Macdonald, 2006, p278). Based on a review of this literature as part of this study, it is

suggested that the consultation activity referenced by these authors, a discharge questionnaire at a post-intervention point, should be categorised as tokenistic participation with the individual parent limited in terms of the influence they can exert due to the nature of the participation opportunity.

In spite of recommendations for the need to 'encourage active parent participation in Sure Start management' (Boot & Macdonald, 2006, p269), recent EY service reports outline activities which appear to be at risk of replicating the issues outlined above. For example, a recent Ofsted inspection report on the Pen Green Sure Start described how 'staff build excellent relationships with parents...gathering comprehensive information about their child and using it to provide a rich and varied curriculum' (Ofsted, 2016, p3). This type of interaction, namely unidirectional consultation, appears to constitute tokenistic participation, with parents powerless to ensure that 'their views will be heeded' (Arnstein, 1969, p217).

In spite of this concern, and in addition to others querying the quality of the impact (Zigler, 1994) (cited in Vinovskis, 2005) (Melhuish et al, 2008) of EY services, their high profile, for example Sure Start, has resulted in the emergence of a societal expectation of parent involvement in Early Years education (Hornby, 2000). This expectation has emerged in spite of a concern of a policy-driven lack of differentiation between poverty and parental capacity to support their child's learning and development and a recent shift to focus on provision of targeted EY provision to 'disadvantaged families' (APPG, 2016, p11).

Alongside these concerns, is the risk of inequitable participation by any parent choosing to engage in an EY dynamic. This occurs because 'no single barrier or characteristic has been identified that is either necessary or sufficient for lack of engagement' (Mendez et al, 2009, p2). Therefore, across the parent population, there is the possibility of broad variation in their participation experiences as a result of the multi-factorial complexity driving such involvement (Blair, 1998) (cited in Malin & Morrow, 2008).

Given the extensive range of issues identified, it is suggested that the use of the label 'parent participation' to describe how parents are involved in EY services is risky. In order to begin to address this, it is essential to determine the nature of these experiences and label them based on comparison with participation models currently in use. Several will be discussed

below in order to identify one for the purpose of comparator in the categorisation of parent experiences in EY services to be collected by this study.

2.4 Models of Participation

Whilst there are a number of models of participation available, only those with direct relevance to this study are presented for discussion here. The first to be discussed is the *Ladder of Participation* (Arnstein, 1969). Conceived in a hierarchical format, this model suggests that there are variations of participation which are directly dependent on the amount of power that an individual has in influencing the outcome of the decision-making process in which they are engaged. Those variations or forms of participation placed at the bottom of the ladder are described as 'non-participation...contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation' (Arnstein, 1969, p217) with individuals able to exert little or no influence on the decision affecting them. Arnstein (1969) does suggest that it is possible for the individual participant to experience 'the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process' (Arnstein, 1969, p217) in the highest levels of the ladder of participation where participants are able to negotiate with traditional powerholders, 'obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power' and have 'increasing degrees of decision-making clout' (Arnstein, 1969, p217).

Different forms of participation are categorised, based on this model, as either non-participation, tokenistic participation or citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein further suggests that the degree of participation experienced by any individual participant is directly dependent on those implementing the participation process. Therefore, it is suggested that, it is their responsibility to ensure that this is implemented as equitably as possible (Walker, 2008). Arnstein refers to this group as 'powerholders' (Arnstein, 1969). This perspective appears to be validated by the terminology used throughout successive UK national and regional EY policy to reflect the nature of the relationship between parents and service providers as discussed in Chapter 1.

The influence of Arnstein's ladder can be traced through to models of participation in current use in the public health and social care sector. These models propose ensuring that service users are involved in service planning, management, delivery and commissioning (Bercow, 2008; DH, 2007) as well as research activities related to these services (Read & Maslin-Prothero, 2011). One example is the Commissioning Support Programme's (CSP) *Involving*

and consulting service users tool' (CSP, 2011). With its five steps 'of increasingly meaningful and active involvement, with increasing levels of reflection and dialogue' (CSP, 2011, p4), (informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering), it may be suggested that this can be mapped across to the *Ladder of Participation*. Another is the model recently adopted by NHS England. Its framework uses a person-centred approach based on core communication and relationship-building so that service users are enabled to actively manage 'their own health' (Nesta, 2016, p2). This type of model appears to align directly with the *Ladder's* highest form of participation: citizen control (Arnstein, 1969).

In specific reference to Early Years, Wigfall et al's (2007) participation model was developed for use in Sure Start and was designed with a continuum format. The constituent areas of the continuum are labelled as: finding out about Sure Start; using Sure Start services; consultation/providing feedback; participation in parent forum; and representative on programme board. Whilst it is suggested that this model is non-hierarchical, its constituent forms of participation can be mapped directly to both the Commissioning Support Programme's *'Involving and consulting service users tool'* (CSP, 2011) and Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* (Arnstein, 1969). Table 2.1 demonstrates the alignment of these models.

Models of Participation			
CSP (2011)	Arnstein (1969)	Wigfall et al (2007)	Sub-category of Participation <i>(based on comparison with Arnstein's model)</i> (Arnstein, 1969)
Informing	Informing	Finding out about a service	Non-participation
Involving	Manipulation /Therapy	Using the service	Non-participation
Consulting	Consulting	Consultation/providing feedback	Tokenistic
Collaborating	Placation	Participation in parent forum	Tokenistic
Empowering	Delegated power	Representative on programme board	Citizen power

Table 2.1: Comparison of Participation models

Whilst each model recognises the potential for an individual to experience a range of participation, from none to complete involvement in decision-making, the lack of specificity on the process of participation implementation in each means that inclusion on the programme board of a parent participant is not a guarantee of the quality of participation that the participant will experience. Whilst the existence of an organisational structure which supports the involvement of a parent participant at this level is a positive sign, it is concluded that 'in practice, all forms and meanings of participation identified...may be found in a single project or processes at different stages' (Cornwall, 2008, p273). Arnstein's argument is that every individual has a democratic right to participate in the decision-making process and, therefore, at the highest level of participation, of any issue which affects him/her. This democratic right, which ensures 'meaningful involvement in decisions that affect them' (Wandersman & Florin, 1990) (cited by Jason, 2012), is most in jeopardy in service delivery dynamics such as Early Years services. This is because services are delivered based on economic models and are closely associated with a consumerist model of participation (Lowndes et al, 2001) (cited in MacNeill, 2009) in which the service user is traditionally cast in a passive capacity as an unequal partner.

In consideration of this last point, the term 'citizen' was employed by Arnstein (1969) for application within the political context. In economic terms, the 'citizen' is renamed as a 'customer' since their role has been traditionally that of the consumer of a good or service. Within this context, the consumer of a service, or customer, delivered using a consumerist participation model, is regarded as a recipient of the service with limited capacity to become involved in decision-making about the service which affects them. Within the public service setting, the customer is defined as a 'service user' if 'the person is someone to whom those services are being made or may be provided' (DH, 2007, p2).

The role played by the service user is widely interpreted and variously defined in the literature. For example, parents within the public education system, and therefore in receipt of a service, have been variously categorised as 'advocates for their children, 'teacher-bashers', bureaucracy busters, culture carriers, and consumers (Fine 1993, p682); supporter/learner, consumer, independent parent, and participant (Vincent, 1996, p43) and as consumers, partners, collaborators, supporters, problems, solutions, and policemen (Hallgarten, 2000)' (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002, p37).

2.4.1 Alternative Models of Participation

Arnstein's ladder of participation is based on a hierarchical model with forms or levels of participation graded according to the perceived power that the individual has at each level. Alternative models, discussed above, have conceptualised participation as a non-hierarchical continuum with participants able to move between the different forms of participation such as Wigfall et al's (2007) discussed above.

These models, whilst varying in structure, do not add any explanation about the cause of an individual experiencing participation at any given level or the motivation or interests of those participants from their own perspective. One model of participation which does seek to outline the motivations of those who adopt and practise participatory approaches is that defined by Pretty (1995) (cited in Cornwall, 2008, p270). It has a continuum structure, similar to Wigfall et al (2007), but like Arnstein it goes from 'bad' forms of participation to better forms of participation such as participation by consultation and for material incentives. This model culminates in 'interactive participation', with individuals participating in joint analysis and action plan development, and self-mobilisation, with citizens taking initiatives independent of any external agency.

Other models, such as White's Typology of Participation (1996) (cited in Cornwall, 2008, p271), bring together the perspectives of 'powerholder' and 'citizen participant' as well as examining differing forms and functions of participation and so highlights the tension between the varying interests of those involved in any participatory process. This type of model, therefore, outlines participation from the perspective of the citizen participant and from the powerholder with differing outcomes for each depending on their motivation for getting involved in the participation process.

On a bigger scale, there are also models to indicate the extent of participation within a given population. Farrington and Bebbington's (1993) axis assesses forms of participation according to depth and width. Deep participation is described as that which engages the participant at every stage but is therefore restricted to a limited number of participants. Wide participation involves a wider range of people but usually results in only in the most shallow or tokenistic form of participation (Cornwall, 2008).

In an attempt to address these issues of the broader width and depth of participation for general populations to ensure their involvement in their own governance in a context-specific environment, models such as the Delegated Decision-Making (DDM) model and Local Participatory Government (LPG) models have been designed (Williams, 2004). The DDM model is based on the concept that elected government and local authorities have a right to set agendas and decide policy on behalf of the public whilst seeking to provide the public with a role in that decision-making process. This would involve delegating certain decisions within otherwise pre-determined agendas to ‘citizen target groups (CTGs)’. It would also be incumbent upon the authorities to ensure that those within the CTGs are enabled to participate rather than leaving it to the already active to represent the group (Williams, 2004, p2). There is some evidence that this model has been applied in UK with citizens influencing local authority decisions (Cromie, 1999) (cited in Williams, 2004). Whilst the LPG model is designed to promote deliberation between citizens in order to promote empathy and understanding with influence exerted only when the bases from which the participants negotiate is equal.

Other examples of context-specific models of participation include these three models of parent participation within a public health service therapeutic context: the medical model; parents as teachers and therapists; and family-centred parent participation (Bazyk, 1989). The medical model views the professional as the expert ‘the only person able to provide treatment, make decisions and bring about changes in the child’ (Dunst & Trivette, 1987) (cited in Bazyk, 1989, p723). Intervention is child-centred with change facilitated in the child through limited parent participation. With the parents as Teachers and Therapists model, parents are given increased responsibilities including facilitating a therapeutic programme however the majority of clinical management remains with the professional on the basis of the child’s needs. The family-centred parent participation model views the family as a whole and their needs are taken into consideration when making clinical decisions.

In analysing these various models, recent critical analysis of service user participation within the context of mental health is considered. It states that service user research should be recognised as a distinct discipline in itself (Rose et al, 2017). Whilst another recent paper proposed the need to change what is measured when considering service user participation whilst proposing the need to ‘raise the visibility of service users as leaders’ and re-define ‘integrated care from the service user perspective’ (Lawn, 2015).

In summary the practical issues relating to the participatory process, including the form, motivations and interests of those instigating and taking part in these processes persist (Spears Johnson et al, 2016). Therefore it is suggested that these issues must be taken into consideration when planning this study of participation. The researcher will, therefore, seek to ensure that she has a 'dynamic understanding of people's social networks and the institutions and dimensions of difference that matter in the pursuit of their livelihoods' (Cornwall, 2007, p278) whilst regarding participation 'as an inherently political process rather than a technique' (Cornwall, 2007, p281).

2.5 Policy Drivers of Parent Participation

A summary of key national and regional economic, education and Early Years policies which has directly influenced the concept of 'parent participation' in the Early Years context and the role of parent within that dynamic will be presented below. An historical perspective will be adopted in order to demonstrate the emergence of these conceptualisations over time.

2.5.1 Parent Participation within Early Years Education: Labour Government 1997-2010

The Labour government, in its first term of office following their 1997 election, adopted a social integrationist approach to a range of social issues which viewed paid employment as a means to social inclusion (Levitas, 1998) (cited by Clarke, 2006). They focussed on Early Years education as one of five areas to promote social inclusion and eradicate poverty. They introduced the flagship EY programme, Sure Start, and stated their intention 'to work with parents to help them ensure their children are healthy, confident and ready to learn when they reach school and are therefore able to realise their potential' (HM Treasury, 1998, Chap 21). Their challenge was to ensure the development of the child in this way alongside ensuring that all involved, child, parent and family, were facilitated to be involved in decision-making in relation to the Early Years service they would receive.

By the time that the Labour government left office in 2010 there appeared to be a shift in the discourse of social exclusion away from a social integrationist one to one of moral underclass with an apparent emphasis on changing the culture of parenting (Churchill & Clarke, 2009). This assertion appears to be supported by Melhuish et al's (2007) impact study of SSLPs which described improved 'parenting' as one of the target outcomes of this service. It is

suggested that this preference for behavioural rather than structural reform appears to shift responsibility for any issues on to the parent.

This policy shift resulted in concerns within EY services about a loss of empowerment for parents (Chamberlin, 1997) as a result in a lack of recognition of parents as experts in their own lives (Gregory, 2000). It was proposed that there was a risk of adopting a 'power over' style of service provision with this change (Lehoux et al, 2012) which theoretically could result, ultimately, in parents no longer able to exercise influence over the nature of the Early Years service they receive and therefore cast in the mode of service user as a passive recipient of a service (Lowndes et al, 2001) (cited in MacNeill, 2009).

Juxtaposed with this shift in political thinking was the emergence of an extensive range of Early Year policy invoking the need for and benefit of parent participation within Early Years services, including Sure Start, in order to achieve optimal outcomes for children and their families:

'Government wants to support the development of a wide range of services for parents to access as and when they need to. At the same time, we want to empower parents to influence and shape public services such as schools, health and children's services as part of our public services reform.' (DfES, 2007b, p1).

This statement clearly captures the current longstanding tension inherent within the Early Years focus on parent participation: the policy-driven specification of several apparently conflicting parent roles, educator and participant, with policymakers retaining ultimate power within the participation dynamic in spite of a stated intention to work in partnership. By the end of their time in office in 2010, the Labour government EY policies referencing parental involvement had designated three roles for parents in this context: service participant, service recipient and educator.

2.5.2 Dispersing power and Early Years Education: Coalition Government 2010-2015

The Coalition government of 2010-2015 saw the introduction of the 'Big Society' and the related *Open Public Services* (HM Government, 2011a), *Localism Act* (HM Government, 2011b), 'Right to Provide' initiative (DH, 2011), *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years 2011* (DfE, 2011), 'Payment by Results' scheme (DH, 2012) and the *Care Act* (HM

Government, 2014), all designed to de-centre power by increasing and formalising the role of the individual and community in the design, implementation and control of public services including EY services such as Sure Start with the potential for parents to become service providers. In this role, parents would be accountable to themselves and be required to balance their 'producer interest' with their needs as service users.

This Coalition government sought to manage the international financial crisis impacting over this period by developing an internationally competitive workforce through their targeted investment in secondary and post-secondary education. In relation to EY policy, they rolled back the universal provision of EY services developed by the previous administration to targeted provision stating that they were intending to build 'on what has already been achieved' (DfE, 2011, p6). Whilst it continued with the partnership working rhetoric in relation to parents in their policy document, *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years* (DfE, 2011), it is concluded that the Coalition government provided little additionality to the previous administration in how parent participation would be facilitated. However, with the range of 'Big Society' based initiatives, including the opportunity to provide EY services, this government did outline a potential additional role for parents: service provider.

2.5.3 Liberal Conservatism and EY education: Conservative Government 2015 - present

With their election in 2015, this Conservative government sought to maintain the previous Coalition government's focus on secondary and post-secondary education as a means to managing the then financial crisis by creating 'a more educated workforce' (HM Treasury, 2011, p6) along with its Big Society agenda.

In relation to preschool education, they maintained ongoing provision of targeted services to 'disadvantages families' by Sure Start Children's Centres (APPG, 2016, p11), despite concerns from SSCC staff. In specific reference to policy-driven parent involvement in EY contexts, the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE, 2014) remains current. Analysis of its references to 'partnership-working' indicates that this consistently takes the form of information provision regarding services available and progress made, by the child, to parents. Comparison with the *Ladder of Participation* indicates that this is tokenistic participation (Arnstein, 1969).

The current statutory guidance for specific EY services, such as Sure Start Children's Centres, continues to require that local authorities 'make "sufficient provision" for children's centres to meet local need' with 'local need' defined as 'the needs of parents, prospective parents and young children...in the local area' (DfE, 2013, p20). It also clearly states that the views of local families and communities should be sought in deciding 'what sufficient children's centre provision' is (DfE, 2010, p7) and that 'good quality and meaningful consultation' be undertaken with the local community 'to ensure services are genuinely meeting local need' (DfE, 2010, p14). In spite of claims that those affected by any potential change in their Sure Start service 'have the chance to express their views' in order to 'build and sustain community involvement in the local children's centre and allow[s] for innovative and creative approaches to service delivery that meets the needs of local communities' (DfE, 2010, p14), the guidance outlining the implementation of these recommendations adheres to a tokenistic definition of participation: 'allow adequate time' and 'provide sufficient information for those being consulted to form a considered view on the matters on which they are being consulted' (DfE, 2010, p16).

The current statutory guidance for EY services makes a further recommendation of advisory boards for the governance of children's centres (DfES, 2013). Whilst it suggested that local authorities should 'seek to ensure strong parental representation by having approximately two to three parents on the advisory board' (DfE, 2010, p22) it also recognised that this formal role may not suit a wide range of parents. In order to facilitate those parents, Parent Forums were suggested as a means to providing a 'greater number of parents and carers an opportunity to have their say, as well as providing a means of communication to the wider community' (DfE, 2010, p20) with a recommendation that appropriate training and support be provided to parents to ensure their inclusion and facilitate their views being heard. In this way, it was suggested that Parent Forums would 'help to ensure children's centres are firmly rooted in and accountable to the community served' (DfE, 2010, p22).

Yet, in spite of a consistent focus on parent 'participation' and Early Years education over a 15 year period, there are concerns of a policy shift to a strongly interventionist approach in the nature of support offered to parents. It is further suggested that parents are being 'overloaded with information or knowledge that can confuse and disempower them' and which risks making parents 'more anxious and less secure' (Daly, 2012, p6). This appears to be substantiated by the analysis of national EY policy presented here which has identified

four potential roles for parents: service provider; service recipient; service participant; and educator.

2.5.4 Current Regional Early Years Policy in Northern Ireland

At regional level, the devolved government of Northern Ireland has consistently identified Early Years education and learning as a key focus of its recent Programme for Government (2011-2015) (NIE, 2011) and current draft Programme for Government (2016-2021) (NIE, 2016a) in order to support its recovery from thirty years of conflict and deprivation (Heenan, 2011) using a rights-based approach.

Early Years education in Northern Ireland has been driven, both historically and currently, by the *Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016* (OFMDFM, 2006); *Programme for Government 2011-2015* (NIE, 2011); *Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021* (NIE, 2016a); *Families Matter: Supporting Families in Northern Ireland* (DHSSPS, 2009); *Delivering Social Change* (OFMDFM, 2012b); *Corporate Plan for Education 2012-2015* (DE, 2012b); *Learning to Learn - A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning* (DE, 2012a) and, most significantly, the *Children's Service Co-operation Act (NI) 2015* (HM Government, 2015).

The most recent *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* has a stated aim of improving the wellbeing of children and young people through a partnership approach with a range of stakeholders including service providers and parents (NIE, 2016b). This parallels the participation policy developed at central government level by the Labour administrations and appears to substantiate the suggestion that UK central government policy is merely adapted rather than transformed by the Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) (CYP, 2012).

The statutory requirement to work co-operatively (HM Government, 2015) echoes the earlier, but current, *Learning to Learn* policy document which seeks to 'encourage and support parents in their role as first and ongoing educators' with a focus on partnership-working between professionals, parents and across related services (DE, 2012a, p18). Most recently the Department of Education (NI) launched an advertising campaign 'Give your child a helping hand'. The supporting documentation describes parental involvement as playing 'an essential part from the very early years through to vital exam stages' (DE, 2018).

In spite of this clear political support for 'parent participation' and 'parent as educator', there is a lack of substantive review or assessment of the outcomes of such a strategy as discussed in Section 1.3 and 1.8 of Chapter 1.

NI devolved government has been suspended since January 2017, however analysis of relevant regional policy documents indicates that, whilst the role of service provider noted in national policy is not present at regional level, there remains a wide range of roles for parents specified at NI policy level: service recipient; service participant; educator; role model and care giver. The identification of these five roles adds further support to Daly's suggestion that parents are at risk of being overloaded with information and becoming anxious (Daly, 2012).

2.6 Summarising the Key Issues

National legislation and national and regional EY education policy have defined the role of the parent variously as: service provider, service recipient, service participant, educator, role model and care giver. Juxtaposed with this is the analytical finding based on this study's policy and literature review of a lack of specification regarding the nature of engagement EY services undertake with parents in order to ensure that these roles are actioned optimally (Perry, 2016; Melhuish et al, 2007; Northrop et al, 2008; MacNeill, 2009). This finding supports the suggestion by Martin (2009) that 'there are tensions both in the ideas of participation...and in the ways in which participation is realised...' resulting in 'disputed practices of participation, and a notable disjuncture between theoretical rationales for involvement, policy intentions, and practice "on the ground" ' (Martin, 2009, p311).

This is demonstrated in the dichotomy identified in this analysis: i) the cited aim by the government to 'support parents' (DE, 2012a), with the nature of this support identified as becoming increasingly interventionist, with the shift from a social integrationist to a moral underclass discourse during and across national government administrations (Churchill & Clarke, 2009), juxtaposed with ii) a stated intention by government to recognise parents as having the right to shape and influence the services which they receive and which will impact directly on them (DE, 2012a; DfE, 2014). Key to defining the exact nature of parent involvement is identifying the specific relationship between service providers (SPs) and parents in order to determine whether it is one based on intervention or co-production.

2.7 Participation Model as a Comparator

Given the clear influence of Arnstein's model of participation on subsequent models, it has been decided that this will be used to categorise the reports of parents' experience of EY services to be gathered by this study. It's clear and specific categorisation of forms of participation with associated definitions will be used to identify and assign lived experiences in order to determine the nature and extent of participation by parents accessing EY services in NI.

This theoretical model will be modified to accommodate the three fundamental conditions, identified by broader review of service user participation literature, as essential for effective parent participation:

- i) the need to have an infrastructure and culture which supports parents to become involved in a way that facilitates them to exert their 'influence over...services' (DfES, 2007b, p2) e.g. Parent Forums or representatives on management boards;
- ii) the need to ensure that all parents are offered the same opportunity to contribute their knowledge as 'informed users' (DfES, 2007b, p6) and exert their influence in improving service quality;
- iii) The need for awareness of the impact of individual difference. Each individual parent will have a range of views and opinions informed by their life experience which will dictate their intention to participate and the nature of that participation including their attitude to the development of 'learning culture' in the home for themselves and their children (Wood, 2008).

The identification and use of a modified model in this way is congruent with the methodological approach to be adopted by this study, Constructivist Grounded Theory, in which knowledge of broad theoretical parameters is acceptable in supporting the evolution of new theory on this subject (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

2.8 Outlining the Gaps

This policy review has highlighted a number of roles for parents within the EY dynamic whilst the literature review has indicated a gap in information regarding how parents are

experiencing these roles, how they are being implemented and what, if any, is the impact on EY services outcomes of undertaking such activity. These identified gaps, which will be used to shape the direction of discussions with parent recruits during the interview process, are summarised as follows:

- With parental involvement in the pre-school education of their child identified as advantageous, there is a policy-driven expectation that parents will undertake one of a number of wide-ranging roles within the EY context e.g. provider, recipient, educator, participant, caregiver, role model (DE, 2012a);
- There is lack of specification regarding the implementation and nature of involvement (roles) which parents may undertake in the EY context in relevant policy (MacNeill, 2009);
- There is a broad range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors which impact directly on the participation of parents in EY settings (Coe et al, 2007; Cullen et al, 2016) and a lack of knowledge about how EY services are managing these in order to facilitate participation (Perry, 2016);
- There is a lack of knowledge about the consistency of parent participation infrastructure in relation to its design, purpose and availability across the parent population in the range of EY settings (Malin & Morrow, 2008; Perry, 2016);
- There is the potential for the level of participation experienced to vary across the parent population in the range of EY settings (MacNeill, 2009);
- There is the potential for variation in the power balance in the relationship between parent & Service Provider (SP) dependent on the nature of the role to be undertaken by the parent (MacNeill, 2009);
- There is a lack of knowledge about any individual parent's capacity to or preference for any of the EY policy-specified roles and therefore a risk of non-engagement by them in any of these roles (Perry, 2016; Malin & Morrow, 2008; Yamamoto, 2015);

- There is a lack of evidence of overt opportunity for parents to receive information on and respond to opportunities to undertake these roles (MacNeill, 2009).

Given the multi-factorial complexity of the issues highlighted here, it is concluded that there exists the potential for any one of these to impact directly on the potential involvement pattern of any parent who is considering 'participation' in their Early Years setting.

2.9 Conclusions

Participation by parents in the EY dynamic is described as an overwhelmingly positive experience for child, parent and family (CP, 2017). There is a lack of evidence regarding the nature and extent of participation experienced by parents within the Early Years education sector reported in the literature, in spite of a strong policy base promoting parent participation within Early Years education in the UK (Perry, 2016). Therefore it is suggested that a gap exists at the implementation stage of the parent participation process.

The identification of this gap acts to fuel concerns that only portions of the target parent population engage effectively with the service. The potential result of this inequity in parent participation would be an increase in the inequality of educational attainment and outcomes within that generation of children whose families were eligible for these services. This could, ultimately, undermine the original aim of developing these Early Years services as a means to reducing social exclusion and poverty and therefore calls into question the political support underpinning them. To conclude, a service which is structurally and fundamentally dependent on parental involvement to ensure that it fulfils its obligations is at risk of heightening the inequality gaps for children whose parents are wholly engaged and those whose parents, for whatever reason, have chosen not to engage with services.

Chapter 3: The Emerging Research Framework

Word Count: 10,463

3.1 Introduction

The literature review presented in the previous two chapters has highlighted i) the range of policy-driven roles for parents within the Early Years context and ii) the lack of specification in this policy regarding how individual EY service providers engage with parents in order to support them to undertake these roles.

The literature review conducted by this study has also highlighted that whilst early research identified an implementation gap (Martin, 2009), and also sought to examine the perspectives of parents on involvement in their child's education (Northrop et al, 2008), these studies have failed to provide information to explain the issues outlined above. With the fundamental dependence of EY services on parent involvement, it is the aim of this study to examine the reality of participation experienced by parents within this context in order to extend current understanding of parental perception of their role in their child's preschool education, the impact of such perceptions on parental motivation to be involved and to challenge the assumptions of ongoing policy drivers for such parent involvement. It is this research focus which makes this study unique.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the research questions. This research employs an interpretive ontological perspective and social constructivism paradigm and a discussion of the challenges and opportunities of working within such a paradigm will also be presented here. The research strategy to be employed is Grounded Theory in order to 'explore participants' experiences to discover new patterns' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) (cited in Brimhall & Engblom-Deglmann, 2011) of a phenomenon which has not been adequately described (Skeat & Perry, 2008). The choice of type of Grounded Theory to be used will be discussed in terms of its application as both an analytical tool and an influence on the research design. This chapter aims to provide a clear line of rationale between the research questions posed and the research paradigm, strategy and methods of data collection and analysis used in order to conduct and evidence this study.

3.2 Proposed Research Questions

As previously discussed, in order to understand the lived experience by parents of the policy-driven participation initiative within the preschool education context, the following research questions were developed:

- i) How is the paradigm of participation in Early Years settings in Northern Ireland experienced and understood by parents?*
- ii) What are the implications of that experience for all those involved in this paradigm (child, parent, service provider and policymaker)?*

The study's key objectives are:

1. To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland;
2. To discover the impact of that experience on parent involvement activity;
3. To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services;
4. To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role as part of 'parent participation';
5. To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services;
6. To propose revisions, based on study findings, to current parent participation strategies/models implementation practices within the context of Early Years services as identified.

As the focus of this study is parental experience of a participation paradigm, an interpretive framework will be adopted in order to design and employ appropriate methodology. The next section provides an account of how this framework has shaped the methodology choice.

3.3 Conceptualising this Research: An Interpretive Approach

The core topic of interest underpinning this study was the process of working with parents, initially developed whilst working with them in a professional context to facilitate the communication needs of their child. Adhering to the belief that all research is interpretive

‘guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p26), extensive reading around the area of interest was undertaken in order to avoid replication and obtain a current overview of related issues and concerns (Bryant, 2009).

A broad range of policy and service delivery literature relating to participation, service user participation, parent participation and the role of parent participation within the Early Years education of their children was reviewed in order to explore the concept and shape the direction of the study. Based on this reading an interpretation of participation was formulated for the purpose of this study:

Participation as a dynamic, multi-factorial, social phenomenon (Cornwall, 2008)
dependent on the interaction of human beings in a service process (Mendez et al, 2009) *in which the parent partakes as a ‘purposeful and intentional human action’* (Kelle, 2005, para 21).

Review of the service delivery literature indicated a current lack of in-depth knowledge about the experience of participation and of the understanding of their role within the EY context from the parental perspective. In order to extend current understanding about how EY service engagement is experienced by parents and how that influences ‘...specific outcomes for children and families who face differential opportunities and vulnerabilities’ (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) (cited in Shonkoff, 2004), abductive reasoning is applied so that this study will ‘no longer adhere to the conventional view of things’ (Reichertz, 2007) (cited in Bryant, 2009, para 92).

The first stage of this was to apply the reasoning that intentional participatory action by parents is directly informed by their experiences, attitudes and values (Mendez et al, 2009) and their interpretation of those. It was clear that understanding these interpretations was imperative as a means to understanding their participation behaviour, their motivation underpinning such behaviour and it’s potentially beneficial impact on outcomes of parental involvement in EY education for their children. It was also clear that understanding parental experience and interpretation could only be gained directly from the parents.

In considering undertaking a study from the parental perspective, it was necessary to consider the approach to be adopted by this study to reality. It is believed that reality for any individual is their interpretation of it rather than the raw reality itself (Gomm, 2004). With this approach the study sought to apply this to both parents as participants and data providers and the researcher as data collector and analyser. It is believed that an individual's interpretation or construction of reality is influenced by social norms (Sarantakos, 2005), community derived consensus of reality and the temporal and historical contexts of the community itself, all of which shape the action or inaction of that individual (Guba & Lincoln, 2008).

Further consideration was then given to the epistemological approach of the study. Taking into consideration the perspective of reality as constructed, knowledge is viewed as subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), therefore provisional, and to be 'judged in terms of its usefulness within some set of confines' (Bryant, 2009, para 45). By applying an interpretive approach to the reported experiences of participants, it was possible to identify an appropriate methodological paradigm and data collection tool to accommodate this perspective.

3.4 The Evolution of a Methodological Paradigm

Having undertaken an extensive literature and policy review in order to shape and define research questions, the next stage in the process was to identify core theoretical concepts, emerging from an initial consideration of ontological and epistemological philosophies, which would shape the methodology of the study.

3.4.1 Adopting a Social Constructivist Framework

Having adopted the conceptualisation of research as 'interpretive', and that reality for any individual is their interpretation of it, this study will now identify a framework which supports these philosophies and provides a basis for the design of this study. A social constructivist paradigm will be applied as it facilitates the study's philosophy of multiple realities of the population to be involved in the completion of this study, both parent participant and researcher, and seeks to know what the individual thinks of their world and their experiences in that world in terms of 'the "processes" of interaction among individuals' (Creswell, 2013, p25) and with social and cultural norms since it is these interactions which shape their subsequent action or inaction (Guba & Lincoln, 2008).

Given the lack of detailed and informative evidence of the implementation of the policy-driven strategy of parent participation within the Early Years context in Northern Ireland (Perry, 2016), it is the aim of this study to explore and explain the process of participation by parents within this substantive context. This explanation will consider the influence of their experiences, attitudes and values and the range of external social and cultural forces on their action/inaction in the participation process. It will seek to explain this based on parental reconstructions of those experiences, attitudes and values gathered through the medium of individual interview.

Analysis will also be informed by the active role of the researcher within the study dynamic. Therefore, within this paradigm, the researcher's own reconstruction of reality will contribute to the abstraction process which takes place during data analysis as theory is generated. The researcher's reconstruction of reality is informed by her knowledge as a result of her professional experience, understanding of key issues in the research area and emerging skills as a researcher. This, along with other associated methodological considerations in the employment of this framework, will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.4.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory: Philosophical Underpinning and Analytical Tool

Having categorised both the study's ontological and epistemological philosophies and identified a framework for the categorisation of participation patterns, the next stage in the development of this study's methodological paradigm was the identification of a research tool. It is necessary that this tool accommodates the existence of multiple realities within the parent population in the EY context. By doing so, it will provide in-depth analysis of parent experiences and identify both commonalities and variations in those experiences to better understand them and provide a 'unified theoretical explanation' (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) (cited in Creswell, 2013).

Based on the belief that parental participation patterns are the consequence of intentional parent action as a result of multifactorial drivers which have not yet been fully explored or understood, and that understanding of these patterns could only be obtained from parents themselves and their account of those experiences, it was necessary to identify a tool which would allow reasons for such participation to emerge directly from the parental report of those experiences and therefore use these reports as data from which to begin to identify key themes about reasons for these patterns: Grounded Theory.

Grounded Theory (GT) was identified as an appropriate tool as it would allow for theories to be formulated about participation directly from these parental reports and which would also allow for the influence of parental perceptions and the broader social context to be detected (McQueen & Knussen, 2002). It was also considered that this strategy would result in a deepened understanding of the process of participation by exploring the experiences of a group of individuals based on the belief that ‘people sharing a common circumstance will also share some common meanings attached to that circumstance’ (Stanley & Check, 2003) (cited in Skeat & Perry, 2008). As well as common meanings, it was also anticipated that this strategy would elucidate variations in those meanings, which would reinforce this evolving ‘descriptive and explanatory theory’ of participation by these parents as a means to understanding variations in participation behaviour in order to generate recommendations to facilitate increased participation.

Having settled on Grounded Theory as the means to understanding the area of interest, it was necessary to decide the form of Grounded Theory to be employed. Grounded Theory’s (GT) inception by Strauss & Glaser in 1967 was described as a ‘manifesto’ which provided a ‘genuine alternative to the dominant quantitative agenda of the time’ (Bryant, 2009, para 2). In its original form, it had as its basis inductive reasoning and comparative analysis in order to allow categories to ‘emerge’ from the data. With this form, the researcher did not engage with the literature although ‘theoretical sensitivity’ or being ‘sensitive to theoretical issues while scrutinizing the data’ (Glaser, 1978) (cited in Bryant, 2009) was espoused.

Individual re-interpretations of GT by the original authors have subsequently been developed. Glaser advocated for a form of GT which emerges theory from data based in a single objective reality through theoretical sensitivity in the absence of specific knowledge of the literature on the area of interest (Kelle, 2005) using a less structured and prescribed coding process: coding families. It is proposed that this allows for theory to ‘emerge’ from the data rather than ‘forcing’ data into specific categories as advocated by the more structured coding paradigm of Strauss (Kelle, 2005). It is suggested that this approach guarantees that this theory reflects the single true reality since it will be ‘an abstraction from time, place and people that frees the researcher from the tyranny of normal distortion by humans trying to get an accurate description to solve the worrisome accuracy problem’ (Glaser, 2002, para 3).

Strauss, along with a later collaborator, Corbin, proposed a form of GT which they describe as a technique for analysing data as a means to theory generation based on a more flexible approach to the nature of reality (Skeat & Perry, 2008). It employs a more structured coding paradigm for ordering data and identifying codes designated as useful for novice GT researchers (Kelle, 2005). Their version of GT adheres to the concept of theoretical sensitivity but extends this to recommending familiarity of the researcher with relevant literature. This form of GT acknowledges the role of the researcher in the research process as an 'instrument of analysis' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p53).

In considering the type of GT to be used in order to extend and develop new knowledge on the topic of parent participation, a number of issues were considered:

- i) The first issue to be considered was the study's philosophical position on the question of the nature of reality. As previously stated, it is believed that reality is that which is reconstructed by each individual and that that reconstruction is directly affected by a range of external social, cultural and historical factors and internal psychological factors. Therefore it is believed that multiple realities exist rather than a single objective reality. It is further believed that these realities directly inform the consequent behaviour and action of any individual and that this explains the spectrum of behaviours and actions which could potentially occur within this participation process. Therefore a methodology is required which accommodates the complexity of multiple realities and facilitates the examination of them in order to understand them and to discover, on the basis of an interpretation of collected data, features and characteristics of parent participation for which there is currently no explanation of or knowledge about (Reichert, 2010).
- ii) Another issue to be considered, in light of the adherence to the ontological perspective of reality as interpretive and the existence of multiple realities, is the consideration of the role of the reconstructed reality of the researcher in the collection and analysis of data. It is the aim of this study that this role be one of an 'instrument of analysis' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p53). Therefore it is anticipated that the researcher will seek to actively interpret what participants do not report or

comprehend in order to achieve a deepening of the fundamental understanding of participation (Charmaz, 2006) which this study aims to do.

- iii) In the initial stages of this study, an extensive literature review was undertaken in order to identify gaps in the research on service user participation as a means of locating the study within the current knowledge base on the topic, specifying the direction of its inquisition and, as a consequence, equipping the researcher to defend the position adopted. This literature review also increased awareness of the theoretical concepts and frameworks current in the research area which may be employed to order and analyse data. This is clearly demonstrated in this study by the use of Snell-Johns' adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theoretical framework of human development (Snell-Johns et al, 2004) which will act as a 'heuristic concept' upon which to order data and structure analysis (Kelle, 2005) (to be discussed below). Therefore a tool is required which accommodates this knowledge of the relevant literature and theoretical concepts.

Having given each of these issues consideration and compared them to the types of GT currently in use, it was decided that the Constructivist form of GT would be adopted. Its philosophical stance towards reality, deemed as constructed 'through our past and present involvements and interactions with people [and] perspectives' (Charmaz, 2006, p10) accommodates the complexity and multifactorial nature of the process of parent participation. In accommodating that complexity it allows for greater focus on the views, beliefs and ideologies of the individual (Creswell, 2013) which facilitates the need for this study to examine these and their role within the participation process in order to deepen our understanding as per this study's aims.

Through its flexible approach to the knowledge of the researcher in relation to awareness of the relevant literature and theory, CGT accommodates the knowledge acquired on the relevant topics by the researcher through extensive literature and policy review and analysis.

Therefore it the Constructivist form of GT which will be adopted since it offers both an analytical framework as well as a philosophical perspective with which to elucidate parent participation. It is believed that this interpretation of GT is most likely to meet the aims of this study since it accommodates the diversity and complexity of the process of participation,

through its acceptance of multiple realities, for a group of individuals and provides a framework which recognises parental report of these experiences as data which can be coded, sorted and compared in order to identify components of participation and facilitate our understanding it.

3.4.3 Heuristic Concepts: Ecology of Participation

By seeking to identify the link between parent experiences of participation within EY contexts and their participation patterns as means to enhancing those patterns based on parental reports of those experiences, the next stage was to identify a framework upon which to order and analyse the data.

Participation is recognised as a complex, multi-factorial social phenomenon (Cornwall, 2008). In order to examine it, this study adopted the theoretical framework based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It places the individual within their environment at a range of levels which impact on and are impacted by that individual. It offers a framework upon which the constituent factors of participation can be identified and categorised as a means to facilitating data analysis (Figure 1).

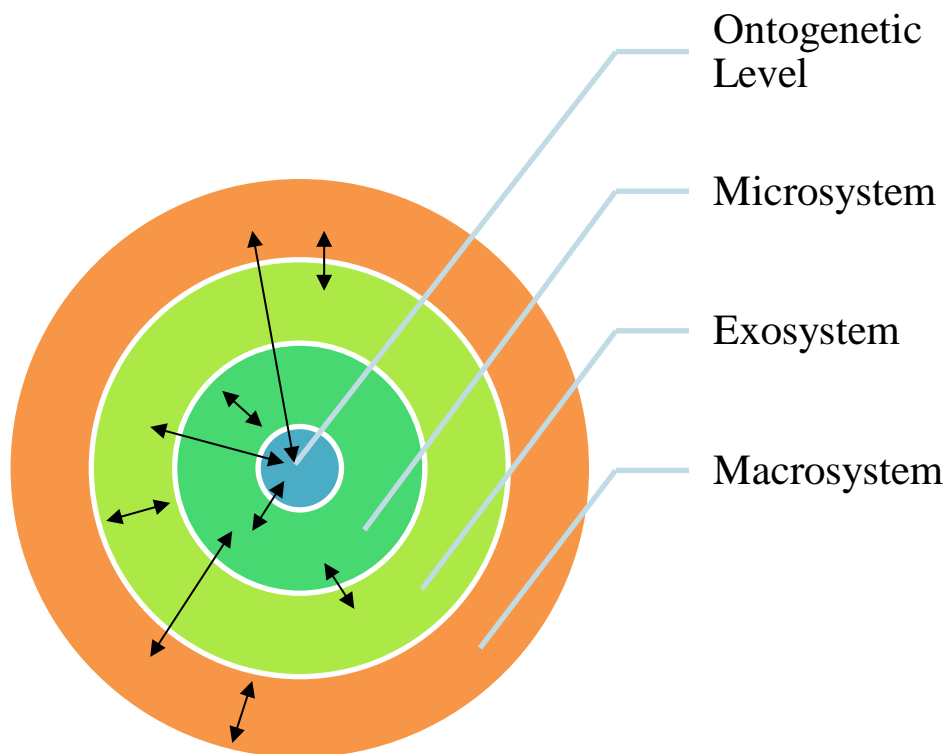


Figure 1: Ecology of Participation based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theoretical Framework (1979) and adapted from Snell-Johns et al (2004)

Snell-Johns et al (2004) developed a model, based on Bronfenbrenner's theory, which proposes that the individual operates within a four level environment: (a) the ontogenetic or individual level; (b) the microsystem level e.g. family, home or school setting; (c) the exosystem or community level; and (d) the macrosystem level.

The ontogenetic level accounts for those factors intrinsic to the individual such as race, gender and age (Snell-Johns et al, 2004) and personality characteristics (Lehoux et al, 2012). The microsystem level refers to those activities, roles and interpersonal relationships occurring in close proximity to the individual e.g. with family members. The exosystem refers to the wider community context within which the individual may not be an active participant. The macrosystem is defined as those wider context beliefs and values such as political, economic, religious and cultural issues which have a direct impact on those living within their area of influence (Snell-Johns et al, 2004).

This framework contextualises those social norms, community influences and temporal and historical contexts, as well as individual characteristics which may impact on the individual within the process of participation (as indicated by the black arrows on Figure 1). It sits comfortably within the social constructivist paradigm since it accommodates the complexity and diversity of social processes (Charmaz, 2006). It provides a framework to upon which to categorise the range of reconstructed experiences and intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of participation (Mendez et al, 2009) which may be identified during data analysis.

3.4.4 Framework for Analysis: Models of Participation

The final stage in the evolution of the philosophical underpinning of this research design was the identification of a model of participation to act a comparator for the analysis stage of this study. Consideration was given to the range of participation models currently in use as service user participation has become embedded within policy and service provision, and discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.7, with Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* (1969) chosen to be used by this study.

The philosophical basis and the model structure were previously discussed at length (Chapter 2). It has been chosen because of its focus on the amount of decision-making control that each individual participant has regarding matters relating to them within any service

provision context. It will be used to broadly identify and categorise but not explain the lived experience of parents in the EY context collected during the interview stage of this study.

This model was identified during the literature review of the scoping phase of this study. The literature review process has acted to sensitise the researcher to concepts upon which to anchor initial thinking during the process of data analysis (Kelle, 2005) as knowledge of these concepts is combined with the new data and abstracted up to formulate new theory including potentially new models of participation. There is a risk that, by focussing on a given model, theorising will be limited only to phenomena related to that model thus limiting theory generation (Kelle, 2005). With the adherence of this study to the concept of constructed reality and the conceptualisation of participation as a multifactorial social process impacted by factors on a range of ecological levels, it is expected that the lived experience of participation by parents will generate data that will indicate commonalities and variations from the model and which do not fit neatly into it. The flexibility inherent with the CGT tool (Charmaz, 2006) and the study's abductive reasoning approach will accommodate the potential variation in reported lived experience in order to honestly reflect those experiences.

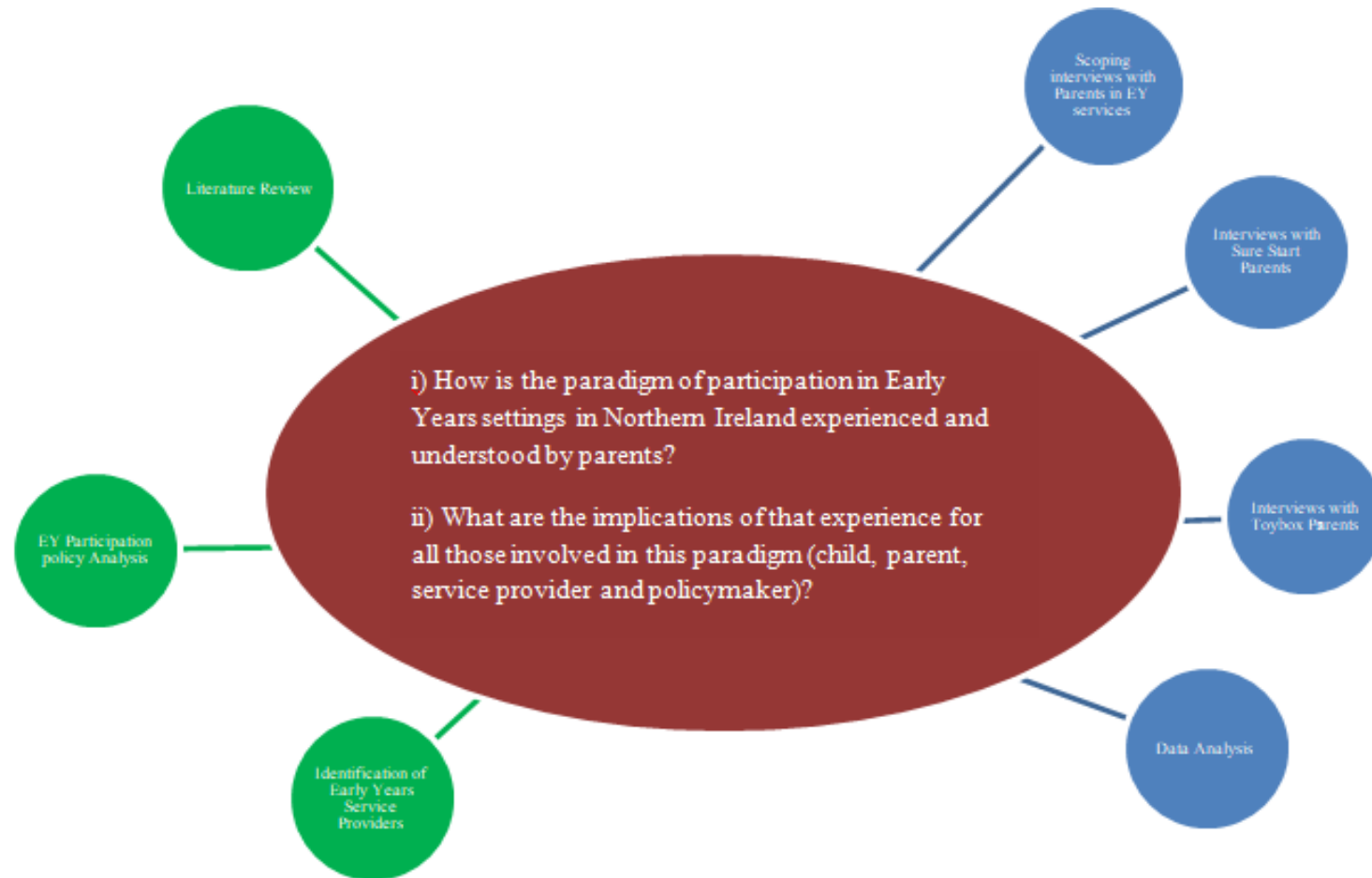
3.5 Research Design:

3.5.1 Planned Research Design and Time Frame

See Research Design plan outline in Figure 2.

Phase 1

Phase 2

**Figure 2: Research Design plan outline**

This is the final research design which evolved as a result of challenges encountered in the implementation of this research study and which resulted in it undergoing several reconfigurations and amendments to both the research plan and timeframe.

The initial reconfiguration was as a direct result of the literature review and discussion with service providers regarding the service context within which parent participation would be examined. The second major re-configuration was as a direct result of non-engagement by primary stakeholders who had previously consented to participate. This resulted in the inability to obtain either primary or secondary data and required a complete redesign of the research study including the identification of a new set of data provider stakeholders. The outcome of the challenges cited is that the study was delayed by approximately one year.

As a result of these challenges, the revised research strategy consisted of two phases of research. These two phases were distinct but cumulative. Phase 1 or the scoping phase of this revised study consisted of a detailed and comprehensive literature and policy analysis, definition of research questions, and planning of the research design including the attainment of ethical approval. Phase 2 consisted of the recruitment of parents from across the levels of Early Years service provision in Northern Ireland in order to gain data on their lived experience of participation.

3.5.2 Phase 1: Literature Review and Policy Analysis

Phase 1 of this study involved a lengthy and comprehensive literature and policy analysis presented in Chapters 1 and 2. Review of current literature and research was shaped by consideration of texts relating to the following areas: Early Years education, well-being, human rights, social inclusion, service user participation, parent as educator, participation models, the Northern Ireland context, social and human capital, poverty and economic regeneration. Policy analysis examined both recent and historical regional, national and international policy and legislation relating to parent involvement and included human rights and the rights of the child.

In undertaking these tasks the researcher underwent theoretical sensitisation as she became familiar with the relevant literature and policy (Charmaz, 2006). This culminated in identification of a number of gaps in the literature, as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, and the

formulation of a number of themes to be used as the basis for the interview schedule for the first group of parent participants.

Table 1 outlines the initial interview themes derived from the issues highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2 which acted as a focus for the initial group of parent interviews (PPG1):

Participation Group	Initial Interview Core Themes
Parent Participation Group 1 (PPG1)	i) Perception of EY services; ii) Becoming involved in EY services; iii) Maintaining involvement in EY services; iii) Perception of impact of EY services; v) Parent role within the EY setting; vii) Nature of participation experienced.

Table 1: Initial (PPG1) parent interview themes

Literature and policy review was ongoing throughout the duration of the study in order to ensure that the study's interpretation of policy focus and research was current and therefore it continued to shape the study as it moved through its various configurations (Skeat & Perry, 2008).

Whilst review of literature and policy remained ongoing throughout the duration of the study, Phase 1 of this study was drawn to a close once it was decided that key themes had reached saturation point: where there was minimal incremental learning as a result of themes being repeated (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Literature and policy was monitored after this point in order to ensure that any changes in policy direction with associated literature, as the result of government change for example, were noted and reviewed for their influence on participation practice.

3.5.3 Phase 2: Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Phase 2 consisted of the recruitment of parents in three stages. These three stages comprised of parents recruited from EY services of increasingly targeted provision. The shaping of the study to investigate the experiences of participation by parents accessing increasingly

targeted and specialised EY provision was as a consequence of the findings from analysis of data collected from parents from the previous recruitment group. This pattern was matched by the researcher's developing knowledge of the use of the tiered model of service provision in EY.

The researcher's knowledge of the tiered model of provision of universal, targeted and specialist services corresponding to perceived need of the individual (RCSLT Wales, 2017) developed, in the first instance, as a consequence of her profession as a Speech and Language Therapist. During Phase 1 of this study, the researcher recognised that this model was also used in the provision of EY services. As a result of this, she was able to map individual EY services that she encountered to specific levels on the service provision model e.g. nursery = universal EY service, Sure Start = targeted service and Toybox = specialist service.

As the researcher's understanding of the EY parent 'participation' policy developed and the issues relating to the implementation of such policy became clearer, the researcher was keen to identify whether the implementation issues related to a given level of service provision, e.g. universal EY services, or were a broader issue. This emergent thinking was based on the premise that, if a service was designed to focus on the specific needs of a particular parent sub-population and their children, e.g. parents from the Travelling community, it was anticipated that the implementation of current parent participation policy would be more effective as a consequence of the perception of greater parental need by service providers. It was also anticipated that the nature of that participation would be identified by the study.

As a consequence of this theory, the initial group of parents (PPG1) involved with this study were recruited from a range of EY universal provision services. This was in order to scope the range of EY services available and, based on the key themes identified in the literature, use these as a starting point from which to emerge data in the form of face-to-face interviews. Analysis of this data was undertaken in order to develop codes, categories, concepts, theory and shape future data collection (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). This process shaped the recruitment of further PPG1 participants as well as other participation groups. This will be discussed further in Section 3.7 of this chapter.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Ethical approval for this study was gained from University of Ulster's School of Communication Risk and Ethics Filter Committee. In undertaking this process each stage of the study was examined and considered for any potential ethical issues. Consideration was given to the development of an ethical code to act both as a prompt during the process of this research and as a framework for the study as well as providing the opportunity to consider potential problems with this study and ways to minimise or solve these (Alderson, 1995). This afforded the opportunity to understand ethical procedures and practices as outlined in a number of sources including international legislation (Aubrey et al, 2000, p160).

The ethical framework for this study was influenced by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (www.un.org) and three other sources. Given the educational context of this study it is appropriate that British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) were taken into consideration. These guidelines recommend that consideration be given to respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom. Another influence was Alderson (1995) who suggested that ethics be considered in terms of duty, rights and harm/benefit and are reflected in the core principles advocated by Barnardos (www.barnardos.org.uk). In consideration of these influences ethical consideration was given to the following methodological issues (Table 2):

Methodological Issues	Alderson's (1995) criteria	BERA (2011) guidelines	Barnardo's principles
Would the interviewer's lack of deep immersion in the service contexts impact on reciprocity with interviewees?	Harm/benefit	The person, knowledge, quality of educational research	Safeguard the interests of those involved; consider the consequences of their work or its misuse for those they study
Would the interviewer's lack of experiential knowledge of specific cultures, e.g. Travelling community, cause value to be lost from data collected?	Duty	The person, democratic values, quality of educational research	Safeguard the interests of those involved; acknowledge the boundaries of their competence; ensure that the methods of investigation are appropriate
How would the researcher ensure that participants' involvement was of benefit to them?	Rights	The person, democratic values, quality of educational research	Safeguard the interests of those involved in or affected by their work; report their findings accurately and truthfully

Table 2: Ethical Checklist

The methodological issues defined in Table 2 will be considered in Section 3.7 'Methodological Considerations'.

All services involved in this study were provided with detailed research protocols of the study. This included the preparation and provision of service-specific information sheets, consent forms including confidentiality agreements and complaints procedure information (Appendices 1-3).

The possibility of literacy issues within the parent population was acknowledged. This resulted in the provision of written material prepared for parents (information sheets, consent forms including confidentiality agreements and complaints procedure information) to service staff and some parents for consultation and advice. Suggestions were taken up and documents

amended accordingly (Appendix 4). The researcher also verbally reviewed the documents with every parent and gained signed consent prior to the commencement of their interview. The process of obtaining both written and verbal informed consent was interpreted as assurance that each interviewee understood and agreed to the conditions of their involvement and that 'they are aware of what is being done and, given that awareness, have agreed to participate' (McQueen & Knussen, 2002, p11).

The ethical issue of a lack of experiential knowledge of specific cultures, on the part of the researcher, was considered with a particular focus on advocacy and informed consent. Cognisant of the need to understand the expectations of the interviewees, the researcher further recognised the need to understand the cultural bases of the range of parent populations recruited to the study as a means to understanding behaviour (Pitta et al, 1999). This was particularly important with those parents recruited from the Travelling community to PPG3. The strategies used to manage this ethical issue are discussed in Section 3.7.

In relation to advocacy and informed consent, the researcher undertook several activities to ensure these. During the recruitment process for all PPG groups, the researcher completed the standard procedures to ensure confidentiality as outlined above. Aware of the risk of literacy issues with parents recruited to PPG2 and PPG3, she completed the activities outlined above. In addition to this, the researcher, recognising the potential for parent recruits to indicate understanding of both the written material and verbal information provided when this was not the case, sought to introduce an advocate to support the parents and ensure another layer of protection for them in order 'to protect and enhance [their] personal autonomy' in the research process (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011, p9). In this way, as many strategies as possible were applied in order to ensure that parents recruited to the research study were as cognisant of its purpose, process and related documentation as possible and therefore that the consent that they provided was informed.

Specific details of the advocates used with each PPG group are summarised in Table 3:

Parent Participation Group	Advocate
PPG1	Mutual Acquaintance
PPG2	Sure Start service manager
PPG3	Assigned Toybox Project Worker

Table 3: Summary of Advocates for each PPG

The steps completed by the researcher in Phase 1 and the early stages of Phase 2, (developing a research question; becoming cognisant of the key theoretical, legislative and policy underpinning of the area of research focus; recognition of individual positionality within the research and developing an awareness of possible ethical and methodological issues), facilitated the researcher in the introduction of this study (Bachman & Schutt, 2016) to the key parent populations.

In specific reference to PPG2 and PPG3, the researcher worked hard to develop trust with key individuals who subsequently acted as advocates for the parents recruited to the study. In the development and management of these relationships, the researcher sought to develop a plausible explanation of the study and herself as a researcher. She also sought to maintain the support of the key individuals within the relevant EY services throughout the duration of the study through regular communication to provide updates. All these steps were undertaken prior to interaction with individual parent recruits therefore facilitating the gradual entry of the researcher into specific contexts and cultures (Bachman & Schutt, 2016). Discussion of specific steps used with each PPG will be presented in the next section.

3.7 Methodological Considerations:

3.7.1 Sampling Procedures in Phase 2

It was the original intention of this study to examine the issues highlighted in the earlier literature chapters by undertaking face-to-face interviews with parents accessing EY services. Given the range of EY services currently available to service users in the form of universal, targeted and specialist services depending on perceived need, it was decided that participation across these services would be sampled in order to begin to examine those issues identified through the researcher's theoretical sensitivity as a scoping exercise (Glaser, 1978) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p31). This interplay would be undertaken in order to integrate 'supplementary or conflicting analysis' (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p31) and thus enrich the evolving theory, reflecting the complexity and multiplicity of the parent experience (Charmaz, 2006) through the evolution of themes, codes and categories capturing these similarities and differences across a broad EY service context. It was anticipated that the findings from data obtained from this broad service context would shape future recruitment from specific EY services depending on the ongoing process of abstraction.

The continuous and 'zigzag' nature of CGT, as it moves between data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013), resulted in the recruitment of three groups of participants for the purpose of this study. They are referred to as Parent Participation Groups (PPG): PPG1, PPG2 and PPG3. The recruitment process for each group was different. Explanations and rationales for each recruitment process will be given below. The inclusion/exclusion criteria for each group is summarised in Table 4:

Parent Participation Group	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
PPG1	Parents of children currently eligible or who had been eligible to attend universal EY service in the previous 2 years	Parents of children not currently nor had been eligible to attend universal EY service for the previous 2 years
PPG2	Parents registered with Rainbow Sure Start (RSS) since 2012 Parents registered with RSS with children under 3 years of age	Parents not registered with RSS Parents registered prior to 2012 Parents registered with RSS with children over 3 years of age
PPG3	Parent currently registered or had been registered with Toybox in the previous two years	Parent not currently registered nor had been registered with Toybox in the previous two years

Table 4: A summary of inclusion/exclusion criteria for PPG1, PPG2 and PPG3

3.7.2 Recruitment for PPG1: Snowball Sampling

In the first phase of data collection, the researcher sought to initiate data collection and analysis in order to identify emerging themes within the wider parent population who are currently or had recently completed involvement in early years education (Coe et al, 2007). This exercise aimed to provide initial data with which to substantiate and challenge the themes and issues highlighted during the scoping phase of literature and policy review. The theory generated from PPG1 would also steer further data collection.

Whilst it was the study's intention to undertake an initial scoping exercise in which participants representing the lived experiences of parents using universal early years services would be recruited, the repeated reconfigurations of the study, a keen interest in commencing data collection and analysis and the limited direct contact of the researcher with the relevant population subgroup, resulted in the use of a snowball sampling approach (McQueen & Knussen, 2002).

This was used in order to manage the researcher's limited direct contact with the population subgroup of parents accessing universal EY services. The snowball sampling technique was employed as follows: contact was made with friends within the required population subgroup and they were asked to aid in the identification of suitable candidates for potential recruitment and to act as intermediaries in facilitating contact. Once identified, these intermediaries would discuss possible participation with potential recruits. If agreeable, the potential recruit's contact details would be passed to the researcher via the intermediary, who would make subsequent contact by phone. During this phone call, the researcher would aim to develop reciprocity with the recruit, and manage the methodological issue of her lack of deep immersion in this population (as outlined in Chapter 1), by referring to their mutual acquaintance and the information about the study that had already been provided. Additional written and verbal information would also be provided.

Analysis of the data for PPG1 recruits was undertaken whilst recruitment was ongoing as a means to evolving core themes and directing the study as previously outlined. Recruitment to PPG1 was terminated once analysis showed that themes were saturated (Glaser, 1992) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013).

It is argued that the use of this sampling approach fits within the umbrella term of 'theoretical sampling' as this has allowed for data to be collected, simultaneously analysed and used to direct subsequent sampling in order to develop theory from that data (Skeats & Perry, 2008).

3.7.3 Recruitment for PPG2: Theoretical Sampling

The recruitment of participants for PPG2 was shaped by two factors: i) the identification of the theme of EY context as a key component in participation patterns by PPG1 parents; and

ii) the resultant need to examine this and other emerging themes in more detail in a small single service setting: Rainbow Sure Start (RSS) serving a targeted parent population.

Theoretical sampling was also applied to recruitment from this service in order to add depth and definition to the initial themes identified by seeking additional data with which to compare (Skeats & Perry, 2008). Due to the RSS population size, it was necessary to employ stratified theoretical sampling in order to identify a representative but manageable group of potential recruits. In order to facilitate this, inclusion/exclusion criteria was developed.

PPG2: Application of Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Based on initial findings of analysis of universal early years services (PPG1), the sampling for PPG2 was stratified in order to sample parents with specific patterns of participation using inclusion/exclusion criteria:

- all parents sampled were registered with the Sure Start service;
- parents registered prior to April 2012 were excluded on the basis that a new region-wide database was introduced on this date which allowed for the standardised recording of registration and activity data. Records prior to this lacked the detail contained in the new system. In order to make as fully informed theoretical sampling as possible based on optimal record information it was decided to exclude registrations before April 2012;
- only those registered parents with children under 3 would be included for theoretical sampling. This exclusion criteria was applied in order to ensure that parents sampled were those who were accessing only Sure Start as an early education service. Children over 3 can avail of a range of preschool services e.g. nursery. Since the aim of theoretical sampling was to examine participation within a particular targeted service of Sure Start it was important to ensure that parents were accessing only that service (Skeat & Perry, 2008).

PPG2: A Stratified Sampling approach

The parent group that was collated following the application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria were then stratified based on patterns of participation developed from the literature review findings discussed in Chapter 2 using the following categories:

1. Registered, active parents;
2. Registered, inactive parents;

‘Active’ categorisation is applied to parents who have attended more than 5 activities between April 2012 and October 2013 based on service activity records;

‘Inactive’ categorisation is applied to those parents who have attended less than 5 times between April 2012 and October 2013 based on service activity records.

Attendance on more or less five occasions over the period April 2012 to October 2013 was chosen based on review of RSS’s attendance records. This review indicated a clear differentiation between parents who attended once or twice and those who attended on a weekly or monthly basis therefore five attendances was identified as a clear cut-off point to differentiate between these ‘active’ and ‘inactive’ attendance patterns.

In October 2013, Rainbow Sure Start had a total of 693 children registered with its service. Data for families registered with Rainbow Sure Start is recorded on the database system by ascribing their home address to one of three regions covered by the service: Castlederg, Drumquin and Newtownstewart. Sampling was carried out on region-specific anonymised service user data. The Sure Start database manager excluded those parents with children over age 3 and those registered with the service before April 2012 as discussed above. This anonymised data was passed to the researcher in order to stratify the sample according to patterns of participation as outlined above. Once the registration lists had been stratified according to participation patterns, random sampling was then applied to these anonymised stratified sub-groups in order to identify 20 potential participants per sub-group eligible for invitation to interview.

The sub-groups of randomly sampled potential interviewees were then passed to Sure Start administration in order to identify those parents and facilitate invitation to interview. A written letter of invitation was jointly developed by the researcher and Sure Start manager

(Appendix 5). This letter of invitation and a sheet of information about the study were posted to those parents randomly selected. A follow-up phone-call was made in order to encourage parent attendance. At the start of this phone conversation, the researcher was always careful to mention the name of the Sure Start manager and emphasise service co-operation when introducing both herself and the project. This was in order to place the Sure Start service manager as an advocate for the parent as required. The philosophy underlying both the action of the phone-call and the content of the introduction was to move the researcher beyond the status of stranger to the parent and open up a form of reciprocity between the 'researcher and researched' (Lather, 1986, p263) in order to create a relaxed environment and facilitate the collection of rich data (Charmaz, 2006) and so begin to manage the methodological issue of the researcher's lack of deep immersion in the service context as referenced above.

3.7.4 Recruitment for PPG3: Convenience Sampling

Recruitment of participants to a third group (PPG3) was shaped by: i) the identification of a broad range of parent roles adopted in EY settings which shaped the decision to ii) examine this theme within a specialist service context aimed at promoting access to education for a specific parent sub-population: Toybox project.

Toybox is a rights-based outreach learning support service for families with preschool and school-age children from the Travelling community operating in eight areas across the region of Northern Ireland. This project has been in operation for approximately 15 years and is implemented by Project Workers with responsibility for a specific geographical area. The service had 170 families registered with them in October 2013.

PPG3: Recruitment challenges: Convenience sampling

Whilst inclusion/exclusion criteria were developed for this service and random sampling identified as an aid to recruit potential interviewees, the cultural norms of the Travelling community negated the potential application of either of these sampling devices. These cultural norms, operating at the exosystem level (Snell-Johns et al, 2004), resulted in the perception of the researcher by the Travelling community as 'the country girl', separate from the Travelling community and therefore to be excluded from it. As a result a new recruitment process had to be identified.

The establishment of a mutually beneficial partnership between the researcher and Toybox staff supported the identification of an appropriate sampling approach: convenience sampling. It also supported the management of the methodological issue of the researcher's lack of experiential knowledge of the Travelling community. This acquired knowledge, through partnership with Toybox staff, informed a number of subsequent actions e.g. the preparation of a study information sheet which met the potential literacy needs of the community (Appendix 4). These activities facilitated the gradual entry of the researcher into this specific culture whilst also clearly identifying a parent advocate as a further level of protection: Toybox Project Worker.

Participant recruitment was facilitated through the undertaking of joint home visits by the researcher and the area's Project Worker in agreement with Toybox management. Therefore the Project Worker was on hand to act directly as a parent advocate as required. Whilst these visits were pre-arranged and parents were informed of the possibility of the researcher's presence, and asked to consent to this, there was no guarantee that such visits and subsequent interviews would take place. Therefore convenience sampling was applied in its fullest form in order to achieve saturation with this parent population subgroup (Creswell, 2013) so that 'everyone – and anyone – that the researcher happens to encounter in a certain place, or between certain times' (McQueen & Knussen, 2002, p75) was invited to participate in interviews (McQueen & Knussen, 2002). The only inclusion/exclusion criteria applied was that any potential interviewee was a parent from the Travelling community currently registered with or had accessed the service within the last two years.

This approach was not regarded by the researcher as a methodological challenge for this study since the aim of sampling from this subgroup was to discover more about the experience of involvement within this very specific context and not in order to extend representativeness or generalisability (Skeat & Perry, 2008).

3.7.5 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews were chosen as the main data collection technique as they facilitated the study's aim to obtain records of individual experiences and perceptions in order to better understand their involvement in EY services as discussed below (Section 3.7.5.1). A semi-structured format was used in order to ensure that only specific areas of interest or gaps in knowledge, identified both through the literature review and policy analysis and through the interrelated

collection and analysis that define Constructivist Grounded Theory (Skeat & Perry, 2008), were addressed.

3.7.5.1 Intensive Interviewing

The data collection technique employed is considered to be typical of intensive interviewing advocated in Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006). This form of interviewing allows the interviewer the opportunity to explore the topic of participation in detail not normally accorded in everyday conversation. It also allows the interviewee to 'tell their stories' and to 'express thoughts and feelings disallowed in other relationships and settings' (Charmaz, 2006, p27) and to 'explore their experiences and describe their relational dynamics rather than limiting it by testing an existing theory' (Brimhall et al, 2011, p48). Therefore the data collection tool is interviewee-led.

3.7.5.2 Relationship between interviewer and interviewee

The researcher took on the role of interviewer in order to complete PPG interviews. She had only scant knowledge in the form of interviewee's name, address for PPG recruits and confirmation of their involvement (either current or in the previous two years) with EY services of each of the interviewees in this study. As a result of this methodological issue, it was essential that she worked very hard to develop reciprocity with each of the interviewees in order to ensure that they felt comfortable enough both as a means, so that the interview was a positive experience for the parent, and as an end, to ensuring the collection of rich data. In order to facilitate this a number of factors contributed:

- i) information-gathering skills of the interviewer based on her 15 year professional practice as a Speech and Language Therapist;
- ii) completion of additional training in qualitative interviewing (Earthy, 2013);
- iii) the development of a manner of interaction with the interviewee informed by advice sought from individual service staff and management and the social and professional networks which facilitated access to and interaction with the interviewees. The interviewer would seek to acknowledge the indirect but supportive and mutually beneficial relationships which facilitated the

interviews, either in written form or face-to-face including joint visiting, in order to enhance reciprocity in the interviewer-interviewee relationship;

- iv) The completion of interviews in contexts that participants would be familiar with and therefore relaxed in (McQueen & Knussen, 2002), e.g. interviews with Sure Start parents were carried out on Sure Start premises or recruits' homes and interviews with Toybox parents were carried out in their homes with the Project Worker present.

The researcher was also aware of her potential influence on the interview process (Aubrey et al, 2000) particularly in terms of the impact of her presence on the behaviour, and possibly the responses, of the interviewee as a consequence of the power balance between the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher readily accepted that as a Constructivist Grounded (CG) theorist, 'negotiations' would occur between an interviewer and interviewee and that the reality obtained during interview would also be reconstructed during the interview process and may not reflect 'prior realities' (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003) (cited in Charmaz, 2006). This was taken into account during the analysis stage of this study when the researcher abstracts from the data, inputting her own reconstruction of interviewee data as part of the theory development as previously discussed.

All these preparatory activities were stepped up prior to engagement with parents accessing the Toybox project as outlined in Section 3.6. Therefore it is concluded that an active role was undertaken by the researcher in order ensure that cultural sensitisation (as required), sensitisation to perception of the interviewer by interviewees and awareness of how the philosophical perspectives of both themselves as interviewer and interviewees may contribute to interaction during the interview process in order to facilitate an atmosphere conducive to the provision of rich data, through the medium of interview as per CGT recommendations, were actioned (Charmaz, 2006).

3.7.5.3 Conducting the Interview

The design of the interview schedule was shaped as follows: i) the model for the schedule was derived from the attendance at a qualitative interviewing workshop (Earthy, 2013); ii) the topics of interest derived directly from the literature review and policy analysis and iii) the

themes which emerged from the previous PPG (as appropriate). Original and revised interview schedules for use across the PPG cohorts are available for review in Appendix 6.

Interviews ranged in length from 15 to approximately 90 minutes allowing participants as much time as necessary to tell of their experiences (Brimhall et al, 2011). Core interview themes were used to direct the interview with clarifying questions used as required (Brimhall et al, 2011).

In total 42 interviews were completed with parents across the three participation groups of which 30 were analysed. This includes: 21 interviews with parents involved with Rainbow Sure Start; 10 parents involved with Toybox project and 12 parents involved with universal early years services. Two of the 42 interviews were conducted with fathers, one from Sure Start and one from universal services. One interview was conducted with both mother and father and was included in the PPG1 group. Interviews were recorded using two digital recorders. A second recorder was used as a backup should any technical issues arise with the primary recorder.

3.7.5.4 Benefit of Involvement to the Participant

It was important to ensure that parent interviewees would benefit directly from their involvement in the study as a methodological issue. The immediate output of this aim was that parents would be offered access to a written transcription of their interview with the opportunity to feedback to the researcher on any concerns or comments that they may have.

It was also planned that a service-specific executive summary report would be given to each service involved in order that they would have direct access to data analysis, findings and recommendations specific to that service.

Finally, it is the ultimate aim of this study to make recommendations based on the theory evolved from the data collected in order to enhance uptake and use of participation opportunities by parents within these services as a means to ensuring optimal benefit to all parents and their children participating in Early Years education.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

Having outlined the philosophical underpinning upon which the research design is based and data collection techniques to be employed in fulfilling this plan, the final stage of this chapter is to consider how the data is analysed. It will outline the CGT-based analysis of the data in relation to Theoretical Sampling (Skeat & Perry, 2008), Constant Comparison (Lawrence & Tar, 2013), Data Coding (Creswell, 2013) and Memoing (Charmaz, 2006).

Constructivist Grounded Theory has been adopted by this study as both as a philosophical and methodological interpretative approach which aims to evolve new theory by uncovering hidden patterns in the data which are re-interpreted by the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore the influence of the researcher must be taken into account at all points in this study. This issue has been discussed in relation to data collection processes in Section 3.4.2, it will be considered in this section in relation to data analysis.

The researcher would regard herself as a novice of CGT. Whilst a theoretical knowledge of the process was developing, her knowledge of the practical steps lagged behind. In support of this and of the practicalities of analysis of data, consideration was given to the use of the specialised computer programme, nVivo. However this idea was dismissed on the basis that, in consideration of time constraints, the time required for the researcher to familiarise herself with this system, alongside concerns regarding the potential risk of technical dysfunction, would be too great.

The researcher acknowledges the potential benefit of nVivo in the analysis, organisation, management and storage of the large data set, 30 sets of 15-90 minute interviews, that was gathered as part of this study. Whilst keen to use the manual coding process as an opportunity to become very familiar with the text of each interview as a means to facilitate the commitment and retrieval of pertinent quotes, the researcher recognises that this knowledge may dwindle over time and that use of nVivo would surmount that problem given its capacity to search large data sets.

Adhering to the belief that 'data analysis in grounded theory involves specific procedures which, when applied appropriately and with vigilance will result in theory that is rigorous and well grounded in the data' (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p32), the following steps were undertaken as part of the data analysis process:

1. Interview transcribed from digital recording (Appendix 7-9);
2. Transcription anonymised by the assignment of a labelling code (consisting of an acronym of service context and number of order of interview e.g. S1 = Sure Start 1);
3. Coding of data gathered in initial sampling (Appendix 10);
4. Comparison of data with data throughout process;
5. Identification of emerging categories;
6. Addition of definition and depth to categories using theoretical sampling;
7. Making written records of coding and comparison in order to elaborate theory (Appendix 11) (Charmaz, 2006).

Consideration will now be given to the processes of Coding, Memoing, Theoretical Sampling and Constant Comparison.

3.8.1 Data Coding

Coding of data involved a process of the close examination of textual data in order to derive meaning from it which provided a framework on which to base analysis (Charmaz, 2006). As the coding process continued the researcher evolved ideas and concepts from the data which contributed towards the evolution of a conceptual theoretical model.

A two stage process was involved in this CGT approach: initial coding and then focussed coding (Charmaz, 2006). Initial coding, using Line-by-Line analysis (Charmaz, 2006), stuck closely to the original data whilst concurrently beginning to identify themes in the data which were then analysed further (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). The original data were colour coded using highlighter markers in order to begin to group themes identified together. A reciprocal approach was used to merge existing themes with those previously identified in order to shape existing themes and generate new ones based on Glaser's questions for guiding analysis: 'What is this data a study of?...What category does this incident indicate?...What is actually happening in the data?' (Glaser, 1978) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p32). Coding in this way 'simultaneously categorizes, summarizes and accounts for each piece of data' (Charmaz, 2006, p43). A range of initial codes were produced which acted to summarise raw data and begin to condense and shape it through the abstraction process. The initial codes used were summary phrases of points identified as common across parent reports (See Appendix 10).

Upon completion of Initial Coding, Focussed Coding was then undertaken using 'the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data' (Charmaz, 2006, p57). This resulted in the corroboration of previously identified themes and the recognition of new ones. This focussed coding, along with constant comparison across in-group and other PPG sets of data, allowed for new thinking to emerge about the data. This new thinking meant that there was ongoing re-shaping of the study as areas were identified for further study and parent populations recruited accordingly (Charmaz, 2006).

3.8.2 Memoing

The new thinking that emerged as the result of coding and constant comparison was recorded in the form of memoing. This involved the written recording of ideas to emerge from each set of data analysis. It captured the exact emergence of thinking throughout the analytic process, the identification of connections and differences at various levels of that analysis and evidenced the direction of the study as further information was sought (Strauss & Glaser, 1970) (cited in Charmaz, 2006) (Appendix 11) as thinking moved from the 'empirical' to the 'abstract' (Lawrence & Tar, 2013).

3.8.3 Theoretical Sampling & Constant Comparison

As previously discussed, with the CGT approach, data collection and analysis run in tandem with each other as the researcher 'zigzags' between each (Creswell, 2013). Typically theoretical sampling and constant comparison are procedures employed to evolve theory directly from data through increasing levels of abstraction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013).

Theoretical sampling was broadly applied across each of the three participant groups as the study sought to confront conceptual categories formed from i) literature and policy review and analysis; ii) revised categories from constant comparison with PPG1 data; iii) revised categories from constant comparison with PPG2 data and i) and ii); and iv) revised categories from constant comparison with PPG3 data and i), ii) and iii).

Therefore theoretical sampling was employed in a two-fold manner: as a strategy to focus on specific emerging categories, and as a technique, to give them greater definition and depth, as well as identifying relationships across categories, and thus raise them to higher levels of theoretical abstraction (Skeats & Perry, 2008). This strategy involves the active gathering of

specific data which would inform and develop identified categories further 'until no new properties [of categories] emerge' (Charmaz, 2006, p96) or once 'theoretical saturation' has been reached (Glaser (1992) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013; Brimhall et al, 2011).

Following on from initial sampling of parent participants from across a range of universal Early Years services in Northern Ireland (PPG 1), theoretical sampling was applied in order to recruit parents in receipt of targeted and specialist Early Years services so as to develop, densify and saturate emerging categories (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Therefore there was a deliberate move to recruit parents who had experience of services with specified protocols for parent engagement in order to further define the relational dynamic experienced during their involvement. It was applied wherever possible in order to inform those categories however its systematic application was not possible in all cases, as detailed above (Section 3.7.4).

Constant comparison was undertaken as discussed above. This involved the coding of data into categories which were then compared to other data and to new data for coding verification (Brimhall et al, 2011). The process moved the researcher's thinking away from specific data to a level of abstraction where an overview of patterns and variations of categories could begin to emerge (Lawrence & Tar, 2013).

3.9 Overview

This chapter has outlined the evolution of the research framework for this study as consideration was given to gaps in knowledge about participation with a consequent formulation of research questions in pursuit of that knowledge. The choice of the theoretical paradigm, as a means to understanding the participation process, has been discussed and Constructivist Grounded Theory strategy, based on a social constructivist paradigm, identified. Consideration of methodological and ethical issues has been detailed throughout in order to explain the formulation of a research framework which systematically and comprehensively meets the aims and objectives of this study.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis of Data for Parent Participation Group 1 (PPG1)

Word Count: 16,946

4.1 Introduction:

With the key study objective of identifying and describing parent participation activities and proposing revisions to current parent participation strategies/models within the context of Early Years services based on these findings, this chapter presents results and analysis of experiences of parents accessing universal Early Years services from across Northern Ireland and recruited to Parent Participation Group 1.

PPG1 consisted of 10 parents (S1-6 and S9-12) with children who were either eligible or who had been eligible to use these services in the 2 years prior to the date of study interview. Parent participants, S7 and S8, were excluded from analysis based on this criteria. The aim in recruiting these parents was to gather data which was not specific to any given EY service but which, following Grounded Theory analysis, could substantiate and challenge the more general issues and themes identified in Phase 1 of this study and begin to address the research objectives of this study. This was achieved by undertaking a single recorded semi-structured interview with each of the parents recruited to PPG1.

Data from each participant was collected, coded, analysed and used, by constant comparison, to shape the following interview, as appropriate, based on the CGT approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013) by focussing on the factors relevant to parent participation. Coding occurred as a two stage process: initial coding and focussed coding as outlined in Chapter 3.

During initial coding, using a reciprocal approach, account was taken of core themes identified in the policy analysis and literature review (Phase 1) which had also informed the interview questions formulation, and data relevant to these core themes was identified (see Table 4.1). A record was also made of new and/or themes contradictory to those originally identified in order to define and delineate these as they move from 'empirical' to 'conceptual' (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p33).

Focussed coding was then undertaken. This form of analysis, along with constant comparison, allowed for new 'ways of interacting with and thinking about the data' (Coffey &

Atkinson, 1996, p29) (cited in McKenna, 2008). This new thinking was recorded in the format of memoing which acted as a basis for the analysis presented here.

Research Objectives	Core Themes of Initial Interviews (developed from literature and policy review)
To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	Parent role within the EY setting
To discover the impact of that experience on parent involvement activity	i) Perception of EY services ii) Becoming involved in EY services iii) Maintaining involvement in EY services
To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services	i) Becoming involved in EY services ii) Maintaining involvement in EY services
To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role as educators on their involvement activity in Early Years services	Perception of EY services
To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role	Parent role within the EY setting

Table 4.1: Study Research Objectives mapped across to Core Interview themes for PPG1

The researcher acknowledges her active role in this GT analysis process as she sought to interpret both PPG parents' reported realities along with that which they did not report or comprehend (Charmaz, 2000) (cited in Bryant, 2003). In relation to PPG1, with no prior knowledge of these individuals, reciprocity was developed between the interviewer and each individual interviewee as a result of the connection with their mutual acquaintance. This was reinforced by the commonality of their academic and professional backgrounds. It is suggested that both the reciprocity and commonalities described facilitated the comfort of both the interviewer and interviewee during the data collection phase resulting in the collection of rich data.

With the methodological approach taken, it was possible to ‘zigzag’ between data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013), focussing on emerging themes and acquiring additional data by which to re-define them whilst retaining an awareness of the themes from Phase1. This also facilitated the detailed differentiation of core and emerging themes and elucidated the links between these densified themes and the key research objectives.

During GT analysis of PPG1 interviews, the role of individual demographic status on parent involvement activity and the impact this status had on the formation of individual ideation, perceptions and motivations by individual PPG1 parents was recognised as it emerged in the interview. It is summarised in Table 4.2 and included here as it has been judged to form the basis of the ‘context of the social reality’ of these parents (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p34).

Participant	Sex	Education Level	Age of Child at point of Initial EY Engagement	No. of Children Involved	Length of Involvement with EY	Employment Status whilst involved with EY service	Profession	Links to Community	Needs of children as identified by professional	Early Years Service accessed
S1	M	University	2 yrs	2	1+ years	Unemployed	IT Project Manager	Strong	None	Sure Start
S2	F	University	Newborn	2	1+ years	Employed – on Maternity leave	Teacher	Weak	None	Sure Start + others
S3	F	University	2 yrs	2	2 years	Employed Part-time	Community Worker	Strong	Two children have a diagnosis of ASD	Sure Start + others
S4	F	University	Newborn	1	Approx 1 year	Employed – on Maternity Leave	Engineer	Weak	None	Community & Private EY services
S5	F	University	3 yrs	2	1+	PhD Student/ husband = teacher	Social Worker	Weak	None	Nursery + EY service + childminder
S6	F	University	Newborn	2	Approx 1 year/child	Employed – on maternity leave	Engineer	Weak	Breast-feeding support for mum	Sure Start + voluntary sector service + nursery

Participant	Sex	Education Level	Age of Child at point of Initial EY Engagement	No. of Children Involved	Length of Involvement with EY	Employment Status whilst involved with EY service	Profession	Links to Community	Needs of children as identified by professional	Early Years Service accessed
S9	M & F	College-educated	2 yrs	1	2 years	Father: employed + Mother: stay-at-home mother	Engineer	Strong	Detachment from mother	Sure Start + Nursery
S10	F	Secondary level education	3 mths	1	Approx 6 months	Employed – on maternity leave	Manager in retail organisation	Strong	None	Sure Start + community groups
S11	F	University	2 yrs	4	8 years +	Self-employed (part-time)	Pharmacist – own business	Weak	None	Preschool
S12	F	Secondary level education	1 yr	2	16 years	Housewife + fulltime carer for brother with Learning Disability		Strong	None	Preschool

Table 4.2: Summary of Demographic Information for Parents in Parent Participation Group 1 (PPG1)

4.2 Summary of Results: Emerging Core Categories

Table 4.3 presents a summary of core interview themes and the resultant broad categories and sub-categories which describe the events, experiences and perceptions reported by parents in relation to their experience of their involvement across a range of EY settings (PPG1):

Core Themes of Initial Interviews	Emergent Core categories (based on PPG1)	Subcategories
Perception of EY services	Parent perspectives	Parent perspectives
Becoming involved in EY services	Parent Interest in EY services	Self-motivation; Capacity for self-help; Personal (parent) experience; Information Provision (community level); Professional Advice; Service Access
Maintaining involvement in EY services	Maintaining Involvement	Effective communication; Made to feel comfortable; Sense of Commonality; Meeting Need.
Perception of Impact of EY services	Impact of Involvement	Met Need; Additional Benefit; Unmet Need.
Parent role within the EY setting	Parent Role	Facilitator; Skills Acquisition; Co-ordinator; Educator; Moving between roles.
Nature of participation experienced	Parent Participation	Choosing to participate; Service Provider - Service User (SP-SU) relationship; Participation Opportunities.

Table 4.3 Summary of Core Interview themes with resultant categories and sub-categories

All 10 parents of PPG1 were involved with a range of EY services: 6 parents attended Sure Start, 2 parents attended nursery, 1 parent accessed private child-minding service and 1 parent accessed community-based subsidised EY services. It should also be noted that 5 of

the 6 parents who accessed Sure Start also attended either community-based or private sector EY service providers or both. Therefore the PPG1 perspectives gathered were developed as a result of experience with a wide range of EY services.

The 'zigzag' process of 'interview-code-analyze-review' and recruitment to PPG1 was ended when enough categories and sub-categories of factors related to parent participation had been identified that no additional codes were derived from the data.

4.3 Detailed Presentation of Results and Analysis for PPG1:

4.3.1 Perceptions of EY Services

Parental perceptions of EY services were generally positive: EY services were described variously as *'fantastic'* (S3p6), *'brilliant'* (S4p16), a *'positive experience'* (S3p57) and *'...I think it's a great programme'* (S2p58). For some parents, this positive ideation was developed in spite of negative experiences:

'...nothing has put me off using them or contacting them in the future...' (S3p57).

These findings reflect those commonly reported by participation studies in community-based services (Rowe, 2006). Given the criticism of many of these studies as failing to detail specific information in relation to parental satisfaction (Boot & Macdonald, 2006), this study aims to address this, beginning with the following detailed presentation of the results and analyses generated from data gathered from PPG1.

4.3.2 Becoming involved in EY services

This core theme was incorporated into the interview schedule in order to begin to examine the process of participation as a means to extending understanding of it. In this section there will be consideration of the raw data from PPG1 interviews obtained in relation to 'becoming involved' and its subsequent analysis. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 4.4.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG1 data)
Parent Interest in EY services	Self-motivation	Socialisation opportunities for both parent and child	<i>'...for a couple of months I just felt I was gonna go insane because...you were stuck, not stuck in, I love spending time with [child], it kills me now going back to work but it was just, you know, and you need to get out...' (S4p17).</i> <i>'[EY activities are] a great way of...getting the babies mixing with other babies...' (S6p3)</i>
		Need for practical advice and support	<i>'...just being out and seeing how other mummies are and what they have, you know, what they do and what they recommend 'cos their kids were maybe a good bit older than my [child's name]...' (S2p4)</i>
		Access to educational experiences for child at the Early Years stage	<i>'...there's a huge market out there of parents who...want to start developing the mind of their children from the get go, why wait til they go to school?' (S2p32)</i>
		Seeking additional support for child	<i>'...I thought that I would like something in place...a bit of extra help...' (S3p3)</i>
		Time to self (parent)	<i>'...it also meant that you got a couple of hours a day to yourself that you could unwind or relax or whatever...' (S9Fp10)</i> <i>'...maybe give parents, maybe two hours of their own, maybe things like that where they don't need the parents there to supervise as well...' (S3p58)</i>
	Capacity for self-help		<i>'I just decided, right, I was gonna go and look for it [EY services] myself, somewhere had to be doing it and I'd get out there... I had reached a point where I was like "Nobody else's gonna do it but me"...' (S4p15)</i>
	Personal (parent) experience		<i>'...getting him into things that I would have done...I went to playgroups and stuff but, ah, getting into things from a young age...' (S10p2)</i>

	Information Provision (community level)	Information Provision at a wider community level	<i>'...actually it was friends that I'd heard it from, people that's recently become parents and I was asking them about it....' (S10p2)</i>
		Information Provision at public service level	<i>'...it [Sure Start] was so well advertised...advertised in official places...in an official capacity...the signs were very clear, clear logo and it gave you the addresses of the different places and it was laminated, I can still see it in my mind, laminated with black writing and it was in a number of different, am, health centres and so on and in the hospital as well...so when you go for your scans, you know, you see things about Sure Start.' (S2p11)</i>
	Professional Advice		<i>'...I did struggle a lot at the beginning with the feeding and stuff, my wee girl didn't put on weight...so she [Health Visitor] actually encouraged me to do two things: one, go to Bernie's breast-feeding support group...and Sure Start and I went to both.' (S6p4/5)</i>
	Service Access		<i>'I had a vision in my head that it was going to be lovely...going to all these wee classes...' (S4p8) '...but [I] never got the chance...' (S4p6)</i>

Table 4.4: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Parent interest in becoming involved in EY services' (PPG1)

4.3.2.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Parent Interest in EY services'

Six sub-categories of 'parent interest in EY services' emerged from the data provided by participant response for PPG1. Once coded and categorised, the sub-categories were re-categorised, loosely based on Snell-Johns et al's ecological framework (2004), according to whether they were 'internal' or 'external' to the individual. This re-categorisation is indicated on Table 4.4 by the colour coding of the boxes for 'sub-categories'. Those coloured 'yellow' have been categorised as 'internal' drivers of parental interest and those categorised 'green' as those 'external'.

Analysis will now be presented on a sub-category by sub-category basis.

Sub-category 1: Self-Motivation

The majority of parents within PPG1 described being self-motivated to actively seek EY involvement and so this has been designated as the most powerful internal driver for these parents. They also reported a range of self-identified need as underpinning their motivation for doing so. This is captured in Table 4.4 under the heading 'Initial codes'.

Within this, **Socialisation opportunities for parent and child** was the initial code given to the most frequently reported motivator for becoming interested in attending EY services by PPG1 parents. When considering this finding, it should be noted that within PPG1 there were a number of parents who had moved to the area for employment purposes, lacked extended familial support and for whom the need '*...to get some human contact...*' (S4p9) was a powerful one.

PPG1 parent reports indicate that parents consistently perceived these socialisation opportunities as having short and long-term outcomes. Short term outcomes were coded as: i) the opportunity to get out of the house, ii) meet other parents and iii) for the children to spend time with their peers. Long-term outcomes were coded as: i) child development of social skills and ii) the development of social networks.

Based on this analysis, it is suggested that parents have clear knowledge and recognition of the importance of effective social skills and the role of these skills in ensuring effective integration of their child into the wider social setting as they grow and develop. This may be due to the wider child development narrative which is now easily accessed by parents.

It is further suggested that the social links which parents foster are not indiscriminate and that parents actively seek to establish social links with those parents they perceived to have similar philosophies and attitudes: *'...if I'm interested in it [attending Sure Start] then I must be meeting mummies of a similar mind...'* (S2p12). As well as a desire for shared philosophy and attitudes, it is also appears that parents are keen to link with other parents going through similar experiences:

'...there was other babies and parents in the same situation...' (S10p2).

A second initial code captures another self-motivator: **'The need for practical information and advice'**. The advice sought was variously identified as i) information about EY activities; ii) advice relating to resources and iii) seeking information and advice from other parents as a means of reassurance:

'...and find out the problems that everybody was having, none that were particular to us...you know, you think you're doing something wrong, he's our first child and our only child, and sometimes you go "God, is this right?" You know, and if you're chatting to other people and they go "My wee Johnny's doing the same", you go "Thank God"....so there's a reassurance from that....' (S9Fp28).

Parent response also indicates that practical information and advice was sought through strategic relationships with parents and EY professionals. The role of professionals in motivating parents to become involved in EY services will be discussed further down in this section as an external driver.

One of the most infrequently reported self-motivators was the wish to provide children with **direct educational experiences**. This was reported by two parents from the PPG1 group with other parents presenting alternative perspectives:

'...I think at this sort of three, four, five, six age they are very individual and they, you know, you should allow them space to grow and play...' (S11p9); and:

'...just anything they were enjoying, you were enjoying watching them enjoying it, you know what I mean?' (S6p8).

It is concluded that, based on participant report data, the majority of PPG1 parents do not recognise EY service support as an educational tool but perceive the pre-school period as one in which personal and social development and play are the priorities. It is suggested that

parents conceptualise 'education' in its most formal sense and do not consider the processes of personal and social development and play as educational activities.

It is further suggested that professional background can impact on parental motivation since, of the 10 PPG1 parents, eight of whom were educated to tertiary level, the two parents who reported educational development in the pre-school period as a priority had professional backgrounds in the education and social care sector.

The apparent de-prioritisation by PPG1 parents of potential educational opportunities in the pre-school period, as facilitated by EY services, will be discussed within the wider context of ideation of parent role within EY settings later in this chapter.

The initial code '**means to access additional support for their children**' represents another less commonly reported motivation for parental involvement in EY services.

This was reported by a single PPG3 parent who has 3 children, two of whom have additional educational needs. With such specific need, this parent identified a particular EY service (Sure Start) as potentially providing the support perceived by her as meeting this need and was therefore motivated to try to access it.

The initial code '**parents to have some time to themselves**' is the final motivator to emerge from PPG1 data. When reported, it was most frequently cited in terms of its benefit to them as parents. In one instance there was a parent report of this and a consequent mismatch between parent and service provider's ideation about a particular EY service with the following reported outcome:

'...parents weren't using it as it was kinda meant to be used, it was almost like, almost like being used like a kinda a drop-in centre type of thing...as a chuck them in but they [Sure Start] weren't having it...' (S1p9).

There were also some parent perspectives of this motivator as a development opportunity for both them and their child(ren):

'...get the opportunity to be away from me and build up his personal development skills and for me to learn, before I went back to work, that wee bit of separation...' (S4p6).

Sub-Category1: Self-Motivation = Conclusion

The majority of PPG1 parents report being self-motivated to seek EY involvement. This internal driver appears to derive from an individual parent's ability to recognise need, either their own or that of their child, formulate ideation in response to the recognised need and then action their self-help skills in order to have that need met. Identified needs were reported in the data.

Review of these identified needs suggests that there is a range or a '*hierarchy of needs*' (S1p31) for parents within any given population:

'It wasn't a priority for somebody else [attending Healthy Eating Workshops within EY setting], for somebody else you'd say "Oh yes, that is important", but other people were saying "Yes, that is important" but it's not as important as me learning maths or learning to write or learning to read...properly...' (S1p31).

For PPG1 parents, socialisation opportunities were the most commonly identified need whilst educational opportunities were the least commonly identified need. The challenge for Service Providers then would appear to be ensuring that service provision meets this range of parentally identified needs. It is suggested that failure to do so risks parental non-engagement with EY services.

Based on PPG1 responses, it is suggested that a further outcome of parental formulation of ideation in response to identification of need, is that parents develop a clear ideation about the type of service they feel is required in order to meet their identified need.

Sub-category 2: Capacity for Self-Help

The second data derived sub-category grouped within the core Category 'Parent Interest in Early Years service' is 'Capacity for Self-Help'. It has also been identified as an internal driver of parental interest in EY services and was found to be closely linked with Sub-category 1: Self-Motivation. These parental reports have been ascribed a sub-category separate from 'Self-motivation' because the constituent parent reports are of action taken by them in response to their identification of need and therefore represent the next stage of 'parent interest in EY services'.

These skills were not reported consistently across the PPG1 group:

'I'm not saying I have it [ability to action self-help skills] but, you know, it's there, being developed, whereas for some people they, they don't have that.' (S5p15).

One potential explanation for this lack of consistency of PPG1 report may be the nature of the relationship between Service Provider and Service User. Parental report suggests that this can be unidirectional, in favour of the Service Provider, the impact of which is unmet parental need:

'...that it [child's attendance at Learning and Development crèche] would be on the Monday from 10 to 12...so then I contacted them [staff] to say "Could we not keep it to the Wednesday?" and am, because that was my half day, and it meant that I could pick her up and they were, they'd said "No, the places were full for that day" so...so I kinda got the feeling that, you know, they were saying "No, take this lovely place 'cos we're doing you a favour" kinda thing...so I felt obliged to take it then.' (S3p29/30).

Actioning such self-help skills was also tempered by, for some PPG1 parents, a concern that there could be associated disadvantages for them:

'...I think looking at that from the outside, the impression of what I must be like, do you know what I mean...that kind of pushy mother or whatever...' (S5p11);

and their children:

'...[there's] an awareness that you don't want your child to be seen as a difficult child... I think that you are acutely aware of how you go about it in an aggressive, very dictatorial, you know, charging at them, then the child at the end of the day, no matter how professional that teacher is, they'll look at that child and they'll associate that...' (S5p15).

Possible suggestions, based on PPG1 reports, for the pattern of inconsistent self-help behaviours are lack of self-help skills, imbalance of SP-SU relationships and awareness that actioning self-help skills may be perceived negatively by service providers. Analysis of the data generated a final reason for this inconsistency, that some parents do not recognise that they could influence decision-making in order to have these needs met:

'...I don't think every parent would...even think that they could actually, more importantly, you know, to have that choice and to have that option, you know, to say, ok, do you want to come and see?' (S5p11).

Sub-category 2: Capacity for Self-Help = Conclusion

It would appear that most PPG1 parents were able to action self-help skills. However some parents reported that their self-help behaviours were restricted by individual level of awareness of and capacity to negotiate with external agencies, i.e. EY services, in order to ensure that they obtained the services required.

It was noted that for those parents empowered to obtain the EY services they felt met their identified need, there was a concern that their ability to action self-help skills in this way would impact on how they and their children were perceived with a potentially negative impact on how their children would be treated by staff within the EY setting.

Sub-category 3: Personal Experience

The next sub-category to be discussed has evolved as a result of the detection of PPG1 data on the direct and significant impact of personal experience on parental conceptualisation of EY services and their purpose. This has been labelled 'Personal Experience'. This has been ascribed as an internal driver.

Parent participant report indicates that personal experience directly informs the nature of EY involvement that parents will seek for their children. For example, older parents S9F and S9M, who had a stated initial preference not to engage with EY services, described how *'...when we went to school nobody went to nursery school, you just went to Primary 1 ...'* (S9Fp38). Whilst those who did have personal preschool nursery experience reported wanting to get their child *'...into things that I would have done...I went to playgroups...'* (S10p2).

Sub-category 3: Personal Experience = Conclusion

PPG1 parent participant report of personal experience has emerged from the data as a strong internal driver in deciding whether or not to engage with EY services. These direct personal experiences along with parental perception of the impact of those experiences have been cited in the data as exerting a powerful influence on decision-making about choosing to engage with EY services.

Sub-category 4: Information Provision

'Information Provision' was the label given to parent participant responses relating to a consistently reported and highly emotive theme of access to EY service information at

community level. Based on these reports, information was identified as being provided at two levels and was therefore given two separate initial codes: i) **Information Provision at a wider community level**, often based on peer relationships, and ii) **Information Provision at public service level**.

Under the label **Information Provision at a wider community level** were reports from parents with preschool children no longer accessing post-natal healthcare support but actively seeking EY service information. This information was accessed via:

i) direct experience of the service by a close family member:

'...I know it because of the older boy, my wife attended Sure Start with him...' (S1p1);

ii) or through social networks and peer relationships:

'...actually it was friends that I'd heard it from, people that's recently become parents and I was asking them about it...' (S10p2).

Data also suggests that information was received through broader generic information sources, e.g. media, available beyond the immediate community:

'...so obviously times are changing and they're saying that children develop, you know, them first couple of years are very important...' (S9Fp38);

In spite of the availability of this information there were consistent reports of variations in the accuracy and validity of this community level information resulting in the development of misperceptions about EY services:

'...I actually thought it [Sure Start] was for, like people who were unemployed or, I didn't know it was for everybody...' (S3p34).

Parents also reported finding sources, e.g. church or community centre, through which they expected to be able to access information, unreliable:

'...I mean like I would go to chapel and stuff and, you know, you expect to see things up about your parish...I didn't see anything...and I'm a youth worker so I'd be quite involved...I'd be in and out of the community centre quite a lot...cos my wee boy goes to, goes to scouts as well and I've never seen anything advertised...it [Sure Start] definitely needs more advertising...' (S3p8).

As a result of the variation in reliability and accuracy of information about EY service access, the reported impact for PPG1 parents, both with and without strong community links (e.g.

parents recently moved to the area as a result of their employment) and actively seeking information, was that they employed their own self-help skills in order to access required accurate information:

‘...if you didn’t go out of your way to find out then you wouldn’t...’ (S3p7);

and:

‘...we had to be proactive about that...’ (S5p28).

A further reported impact of incorrect information provision at community level on PPG1 parents was the creation of expectation about the EY services that they might gain: *‘I had a vision in my head that it was going to be lovely...’ (S4p8)*. Several parents reported a mismatch between these service expectations and the service that they went on to receive. They described responding negatively to these experiences:

‘...that made me feel quite bitter...’ (S2p2).

The initial code **Information Provision at public service level** refers to reported experiences of information provided about EY services to parents by associated public services which they accessed in the ante- and postnatal periods at the wider community level. Information was provided in a range of formats e.g. service advertisement in key antenatal locations, information pack provision at designated points of post-partum care and from healthcare professionals.

Several parental reports indicated that information provision, especially by healthcare professionals, reflected a similar lack of accuracy and specificity of information as those experiences coded under 'Information Provision at a wider community level'. One parent reported that she *‘...was getting very inaccurate information...I didn’t really feel that that was totally clear from either my Health Visitor or midwives and I felt the midwives didn’t know too much about the groups...’ (S2p6)*. Whilst another parent described a lack of information about service access criteria from healthcare professionals:

‘...I asked my Health Visitor about it [Sure Start] who says “You know, your area mightn’t get in”...I thought I wasn’t going to get in so I went down then when I heard that they were allowing the area in then...’ (S10p2).

These parent participant responses give a clear indication by PPG1 parents of a presumption of accuracy of information due to the nature of the information source e.g. the profession of the information provider:

‘...she [allied health professional] was the professional in her line...’ (S3p21).

Data coded under this heading also provides evidence of the development of service expectation by parents as a result of EY service information received particularly in relation to service access information:

‘...[upon reading a Sure Start ad] so I thought “oh that’s great, I’ll remember to do that [attend Sure Start] and I’ll be very proactive about that”...’ (S2p11).

These parents were subsequently refused access to the advertised EY services and the gap they experienced between service expectation, as a result of service misinformation, and the service that they received was reported as a negative experience:

‘...unfortunately that was not a good experience for me...’ (S2p55);

and:

‘...I was very upset because I felt very rejected...’ (S2p2).

This replicates the experiences reported by PPG1 parents and coded under 'Information Provision at a wider community level'.

Sub-category 4: Information Provision = Conclusion

It appears that whilst information is available at community level and acts to encourage parents to become involved in EY services, there is high variation in its specificity and accuracy, especially regarding access criteria, service location and service provision, with some evidence of regional variation, which, when experienced, can impact negatively on parents. The reported lack of specificity and accuracy of information was not reported to be source specific (healthcare professional versus social network).

These themes pose particular risk for new parents who *‘...maybe you’ve moved to a place and you really only know your work colleagues...’ (S6p13)* and may experience socially isolation. There is a clear resultant dependence on community level information *‘...particularly as your first child is entering into that process it’s all very, very unknown, it’s like what on earth is this process, what am I engaging with here?’ (S5p10).*

Sub-category 5: Professional Advice

As previously discussed there is a cohort of PPG1 parents who reported actively seeking EY service access in response to identified need. Within PPG1 there were also a few parents who had not actively sought EY service support, but who had accessed these services as the result of professional advice or recommendation. These ranged from parents new to the community as a result of job location to older parents with no personal experience of using EY services themselves as children.

The impact of 'professional advice' appears to be dependent on the timing of the provision of such advice. It has been found to be most effective when provided in conjunction with or in response to parental motivation derived from their identification of need. For example one parent reported that, upon original professional recommendation, '*...I kinda dismissed it...*' (S3p34) but that upon deciding that '*...I thought that I would like something in place...a bit of extra help...*' (S3p3), the recommendation was accessed.

It was also identified from the data that there is a presumption of guarantee of service access or preferred provision as a result of professional advice. With this presumption and a perception of professional endorsement, there were also reports of consequent failure to receive anticipated services and the resultant negative impact of such an experience. The concepts of 'service received' and 'service expected' will be discussed later in this chapter.

There is also evidence to indicate that 'professional advice' can cause parents to feel judged and disempowered:

S9M: '*...I think if you keep them at home for the first few years you're looked on as that you're not giving them the opportunity that you should be giving them...a lot of pressure to send them out there...you're even looked on if they haven't gone to a pre-pre...*' (S9Mp38).

These reports indicate, that for some parents in the PPG1 group, there is a clear preference not to engage with EY services. The driver impacting on this appear to be personal experience, for example, S9 reported that '*...when we went to school nobody went to nursery school, you just went to Primary 1...*' (S9Fp38). The subsequent impact of the external drivers of professional advice or information provision through social networks appears to be to cause parents anxiety. In spite of this, the reported outcome, for these PPG1 parents, is that

they have allowed their preferences to be shaped and influenced by professional advice resulting in engagement with EY services. Therefore it could be suggested that for those parents who had received direct professional advice to become involved in an EY service, this advice was a more powerful driver than their own Personal Experience.

Sub-category 5: Professional Advice = Conclusion

Professional Advice has been identified as very powerful in influencing PPG1 parental involvement in EY services. It has been found to shape the actions of parents including those who had a personal preference not to become involved in EY services. It may be argued that, in some of the reported experiences, this advice acted to cause parents not to be equitable partners in the decision-making about their choice to involve themselves and their families in EY services.

The evidence further suggests that professional recommendation does create parental ideation about the service to be received and is not a guarantee of definite EY service access or provision.

Sub-category 6: Service Access

The final sub-category to emerge from the data constituting the Core Category of 'Parent Interest in EY service' is 'Service Access'. This theme has emerged in conjunction with a range of other themes already discussed here. It has been defined as a separate sub-category as the result of consistent and emotive nature of its reporting by PPG1 parents.

This sub-category has close links with the sub-category 'Information Provision'. It has evolved from reports by PPG1 parents who had not received a direct medical professional recommendation to seek EY services but were self-motivated to do so as the result of identified need. As previously outlined, they experienced a reported reliance on external information sources to inform them about such access. These reports indicate that, at the point of EY service information receipt, those parents developed ideation regarding the nature of the service to be received with reports of these expectations subsequently being unmet:

'So that day I'm sure the poor woman [Sure Start staff] on the other end was, felt bad 'cos I was in tears with her on the phone and said 'Listen, I don't understand why I

can't participate in Sure Start when I really want to and feel as if I need the support' and she said 'Well, I'm really sorry, there's nothing else I can do' and that was it...so unfortunately that was not a good experience for me at all...' (S2p2).

A gap has been identified between EY service information provision, at either the wider community level or by professionals encountered as a result of involvement with public services (e.g. Health Visitor, Midwife, GP), and actual EY service access. This gap was experienced by those PPG1 parents who were working parents on maternity leave and who had self-sought EY services with a consequential reported negative emotional impact:

'...it wasn't pleasant...it was kinda like...you're not in our catchment area, so nothing to do with us, go and research on your own...' (S3p6).

This impact was reported as a perceived discrimination as a result of being a working parent:

'Because everything is like times, everything's done like at times where, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, in the morning up until about 3 or 4...whereas like the earliest I can leave work is 4 o'clock...so there's never a chance that you can take him without using all your holidays to go and attend things...' (S4p38).

Another reported impact of failure to access EY services was concern about the consequences for their child:

'...he'll [child] miss those opportunities, I think, because I have to go to work...' (S4p39).

Sub-category 6: Service Access = Conclusion

It is concluded that parents motivated to seek EY service input based on internal drivers are at risk of receiving faulty EY service information, especially in relation to access criteria. This can result in parents failing to access the EY service in which they are interested.

The impact of this for the parent can be a negative one with consequential development of negative ideation about these services. Working parents, in particular, have identified a gap in EY service access and provision for them and their children both during maternity leave and on parental return to work.

4.3.2.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Parent Interest in Early Years Service'

The focus of this study is parent participation in EY services in NI. Review of literature and policy indicated that this involves a number of steps (Northrop et al, 2008). These steps have been labelled by this study as 'becoming involved' and 'staying involved' and have shaped the core themes for the interview schedule used with parents recruited to the PPG1 group.

This section of the chapter has focussed on the data obtained from these parents when considering becoming involved in EY services. Abstraction of that initial data has resulted in the development of the core category: 'Parent Interest in Early Years Service'. The key phrase in this label is 'Parent Interest'. This captures the fundamental basis of parent involvement: their interest in becoming involved.

For the majority of PPG1 parents, this interest is internally driven as the result of parent-identified need with very limited report of this identified need as a desire for educational input for their child. There is a minority of PPG1 parents who have become interested in EY involvement as the result of an external driver: professional advice.

The key difference between these two groups appears to be their own personal experience: those parents who did not experience EY services tended not to identify a need to become involved in spite of some evidence of parental awareness of wider societal narrative on the perceived benefit of EY involvement.

The very broad findings of Northrop et al (2008) are echoed but also densified by the detailed and specific findings of this study, of parent involvement as a staged process, which was able to specify the powerful internal drivers of 'self-motivation' and 'capacity for self-help'. Given the additional detail generated by this study from PPG1, a group of parents accessing a broad range of EY services in Northern Ireland, it was decided that further information regarding the stages of parents getting involved with these services could be generated by examining key concepts with service-specific and population-specific parent participation groups recruited by theoretical sampling and discussed in later chapters.

4.3.3 Maintaining Involvement in EY Services

The next step of parent participation in EY services identified in the literature, and following on from 'becoming involved', was 'staying involved'. In this section there will be consideration of the raw data from PPG1 obtained in relation to this theme. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 4.5.

Emerging Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG1 data)
Maintaining Involvement	Effective Communication	Relationship building	<i>'...definitely you would build up a good relationship [with EY staff]...' (S6p20)</i>
		Management of parental need	<i>'...I think the first year I was very tired, he wasn't sleeping and they [EY staff] were very understanding, she would actually sit, hold my hand, many's a day I went in and I was in tears...they were nearly like counsellors themselves, they were so good...' (S9Mp13)</i>
		Sense of gratitude	<i>'and they says "Look [parent's name] this is the information day, will you come along to that?"...so, because I'd previously said "yes" they just kept asking me...the reason I said "Yes" was because... it was just like giving back to them...' (S1p10/11)</i>
		Facilitation of parental contribution	<i>'That's something that they [EY staff] would have asked me about because if they were working with other mothers, am, they says "We know you really struggled at the start and what do you think?"...' (S6p18).</i>

	Made to feel comfortable	Feeling welcome	<i>'...I remember when we went up the stairs, the room...it was really lovely, it was really welcoming...'</i> (S6p14)
		Not feeling judged by staff	<i>'...I have to say the girl in our group [EY staff] was very good and very aware...she didn't ever make you feel like your question was stupid...'</i> (S10p9)
		Not feeling judged by other parents	<i>'...people were honest and there was no guardedness and maybe that, I think that's different experience that I found, 'cos even in school [parent's place of employment] when you talk about your children...there's a wee bit more of a comparison made...'</i> (S2p24)
		Feeling safe	<i>'...[the EY service setting had a] very sort of collegial atmosphere and a very safe environment...'</i> (S2p13)
	Sense of Commonality	being <i>'...in the same position...'</i>	<i>'...I think I connected with the women, I thought "They are a bit like me, they're very like me"...there was no guardedness...'</i> (S6p24)
	Meeting Need	Service provision meets parent-identified need	<i>'...I go to two playgroups...I would still go to them now just to keep up the interaction with him...'</i> (S10p7)

Table 4.5: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Maintaining Parent Involvement in EY services' (PPG1)

4.3.3.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Maintaining Involvement'

Four sub-categories of 'maintaining involvement' of parents interest in EY services emerged from the data provided by participant response for PPG1. Once coded and categorised, the sub-categories were re-categorised, in the same way as the previous core category, loosely based on Snell-Johns et al's ecological framework (2004), according to whether they were 'internal' or 'external' to the individual. This re-categorisation is indicated on Table 4.5 by the colour coding of the boxes for 'sub-categories'. Those coloured 'yellow' have been categorised as 'internal' drivers of parental interest and those categorised 'green' as 'external'.

Analysis will now be presented on a sub-category by sub-category basis.

Sub-category 1: Effective Communication

Effective communication with their EY service was consistently reported by PPG1 parents as a core feature of their ongoing involvement with EY services. The mode of communication was either i) face-to-face interaction as a means to receiving information of upcoming events and feedback about their child:

'...staff were very engaging with the parent...they would have talked to you and they would have told you about your child...' (S11p2);

or ii) phone contact to provide event reminders with a stated preference for face-to-face contact.

The reported impact of this communication was: i) relationship building between parent and EY staff; ii) maintenance of parent involvement; iii) recognition and management of parental need by EY staff; iv) parental sense of gratitude and v) facilitation of parental contribution. An additional impact reported was the active participation of one parent at management committee level as a consequence of effective communication and relationship development with EY staff:

'I sort of went to the door [with the first child] or whatever but, am, I did develop a good rapport with the manager...[the manager] approached me, I think somewhere a few months into [second child's] preschool year, you know, "Would you think of being on the management committee?"...' (S11p3).

The communication experienced across the range of PPG1 parents was, however, variable with negative experiences resulting in parental withdrawal from EY services. There was also a reported perception of a lack of '*free flowing communication*' (S5p25) in relation to specific

service provisions leading one parent to conclude that '*...there's no choice, it's like right, that's it...you just have to conform...*' (S5p24).

Sub-category 1: Effective Communication = Conclusion

Data analysis indicates that, for PPG1 parents, effective communication between parents and EY staff acts as the basis for relationship development. This relationship development has been reported to facilitate parental needs, maintain and increase parental involvement, in some cases to management committee level, and there is also some suggestion of an evolving recognition by EY staff of the potential contribution from parents.

There is also evidence to suggest that there is wide variation in the effectiveness of communication experienced and reported by PPG1 parents across the range of their respective services.

Based on PPG1 parent report, it is concluded that communication tends to be uni-directional in the form of information provision to parents with only limited reports of active parental contribution, in the form of opinions and experiences, sought by EY staff. There is also the suggestion of deteriorating communication, with consequential impact on parent-staff relationships, when parental needs exceed the parameters of that service e.g. accessing a specific service or accessing a service on a given date.

Sub-category 2: Made to feel Comfortable

Consistent PPG1 reports of the role of being made to feel comfortable by staff when attending EY services, as a means to maintaining their involvement, resulted in the development of sub-category with close links to 'effective communication': 'made to feel comfortable'. The emotional impact of this driver is captured in the parental report that it '*...felt as if you mattered whenever you walked through the door...*' (S2p25).

The close link between being 'made to feel comfortable' and 'effective communication' is clearly demonstrated by one parent report of feeling like '*an outsider*' (S4p11) when EY staff did not effectively communicate. The reported consequence of that experience was that the parent withdrew from the service as she '*...felt so uncomfortable...*' and that she '*...would never go back [to the EY service] again...*' (S4p4).

PPG1 reports referred to a range of experiences which were initially coded as i) 'being made to feel welcome'; 'not feeling judged by EY staff'; 'not feeling judged by other parents' and 'feeling safe'. When any of these were experienced there was a clear positive impact:

'I didn't mind that half hour journey up the road, knowing you were getting some lovely, comfortable company...' (S4p7).

Sub-category 2: Made to feel Comfortable = Conclusion

PPG1 reports give a clear indication of a positive correlation between how comfortable a parent feels and the likelihood of their maintaining their involvement with EY services. How comfortable they do feel is also closely related to how effective they perceive communication to be between them and EY staff and service providers. There is also a clear indication, from these reports, of PPG1 perception of their sense of comfort being managed by EY staff with no indication of parental role in the management of this dynamic.

Sub-category 3: Sense of Commonality

Another sub-category to emerge from the data was based on PPG1 reports of being '*...in the same position...*' (S1p27) as other parents attending EY services. This report by PPG1 parent S1 provided the initial code for this sub-category. This sub-category has close links to the last sub-category 'made to feel comfortable'.

The reported need for a sense of commonality appears to be due to a wish to avoid feeling 'stupid' or 'insecure' by anyone perceived to not be from their own community:

'...they [other parents] didn't have to go out...so they were still in their own community...they were amongst their peers, so they weren't going into a place where they would maybe feel that, you know, based on insecurity...be made to feel stupid...they [parents] were in the same position as them [other EY parents]...they weren't going to find any, know, so to speak, middle class...gonna make them feel insecure...kinda be looking at them as if to say "You don't know that?"' (S1p26/27).

Based on this statement, it is suggested that location of the EY service in the local community and a perception of other users as being of the same class are key factors in determining parental perception of their 'sense of commonality'. This appears to be supported by another PPG1 report of withdrawal from the EY as a result of a perceived lack of commonality:

'...I thought I would have gotten more out of it socially than I did but I, I didn't but I think, I was a breast-feeding mother and the area that I was going to it [Sure Start] was sort of frowned upon...you sort of get looked at a bit...I think that's why, I think I maybe would have kept it up more...if I had met people of a similar outlook...' (S6p2).

Sub-category 3: Sense of Commonality = Conclusion

This sub-category has been labelled as an internal driver of parent participation behaviour with close links to the other 'internal' sub-category 'Made to feel Comfortable'. It appears to be directly dependent on a parental need to recognise shared commonalities with other parents in order to maintain involvement.

Sub-category 4: Meeting Need

As described in the section above, the sub-categories of 'self-motivation' and 'capacity for self-help' emerged from the data based on powerful and consistent parent reports of demonstrating such behaviours. The reports suggest that these behaviours occurred as the result of self-identified need culminating in active parental interest in becoming involved in EY services. The role of need in relation to maintaining parent involvement in EY services, is equally powerful in this step of participation with PPG1 reports suggesting a direct correlation between parentally identified need and service provision to meet that need.

PPG1 data was collected which indicated parental perception of met need for each of the areas of need outlined above in Section 4.3.2.1 (need for socialisation opportunities for parents and their children, need for practical advice, access to educational experiences for their children, access to additional support and time to self) resulting in ongoing parent involvement in EY services by PPG1 parents.

However this is not a consistently reported experience across constituent PPG1 parents with some reporting a mismatch between identified need and met need. Particularly important were reports suggesting a gap between EY service offered and identified parental need:

'...I'll tell you...from memory, some of the cookery programmes, that type of stuff didn't seem to take off...people got a leaflet, say, on healthy eating but they didn't really want to do much more on healthy eating...didn't want to do any programmes on it...but, you see, interesting thing is, there was a programme...it was IT, computers

and they also did...basically a access to Maths and English...those programmes were fully attended...’ (S1p11/12).

This report clearly indicates that the risk of a mismatch between services provided and parental need could result directly in parental non-attendance. Parental ideation about the cause of this mismatch was that EY service staff had ‘*missed a trick*’ (S1p12) as a result of not doing ‘*the right research*’ (S1p12). It was further suggested that this gap emerged as a direct result of the difference in personal educational attainment experience between Service Provider management and Service Users:

‘...it would be a revelation to those managers because...they’ve all gone to college and university...’ ‘Oh we need more healthy eating, oh we need more health and safety around the house’...that’s exactly what a middle class person would be saying... and you wouldn’t be thinking about...basic maths...that’s already in place...whereas somebody who hasn’t achieved thinks “Oh I wish I [hadn’t missed that], I feel insecure, I don’t want my child to feel that way too”...’ (S1p24-26).

Sub-category 4: Meeting Need = Conclusion

It is concluded that maintenance of parental involvement in EY services is as a result of a perceived match or a positive mismatch between EY services offered and parental need and that this is dependent on a match between service provider perception of parental need and parent perception of parental need.

4.3.3.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Maintaining Involvement'

This section of the chapter has focussed on the data obtained from these parents when considering 'staying involved' or maintaining their involvement in EY services. Abstraction of that initial data has resulted in the development of the core category: 'Maintaining Involvement'.

PPG1 parent responses indicate that they maintain their involvement in EY services as the result of internally driven sense of being made to feel comfortable with the EY context and the closely linked theme, a shared sense of commonality with other parents. Perception of effective communication and service provision which meets identified need were the other powerful drivers to emerge from the data. Therefore this study adds detail to support and explain findings of earlier studies which reported that 'meeting the expectations of

participating parents' ensured their ongoing involvement and that 'the first few contacts' determined their 'pattern of engagement over subsequent years' (Northrop et al, 2008).

Inverting these findings as a means to exploring them more fully, it is suggested that 'perception of difference' and 'mismatch of parental need' between parent and service provider are the main barriers to maintaining parental involvement for PPG1 parents. The identification of these shaped the direction of subsequent enquiry with service-specific and population-specific parent groups as per CGT protocol. These findings will be discussed in later chapters.

4.3.4 Perception of Impact of EY Services

Another core theme which shaped the interview schedule for use with PPG1 participants was entitled 'perception of impact of EY services'. This theme was identified following review of the literature and related policy and the finding of a lack of knowledge about how parents were being involved in EY services and how parents perceived that involvement (Melhuish et al, 2008). These themes were of interest as a means to understanding any potential link between these and how that impacted on parent participation behaviour. A summary of the findings of presented in Table 4.6.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG1 data)
Impact of Involvement	Met Need		<p><i>'...without it I would have been a sadder, more upset mother...'</i> (S2p48)</p> <p><i>'a Godsend at times...'</i> (S6p5)</p>
	Additional Benefit	child's enjoyment of activity	<i>'...he just loves that interaction with the other kids and playing with the musical instruments...'</i> (S4p20)
		opportunities for physical play	<i>'...my boys...need places to go and stuff to do...and to use up their energy...'</i> (S2p50)
		negotiation skills	<i>'...just learning that, you know, you can't have that exact whatever you want that exact time, you know, you have to wait and let somebody else do it...'</i> (S1p35)
		ability to cope with change	<i>'...that skill of being an adaptable personality...'</i> (S2p49)
		increased confidence (child)	<i>'...[child] has been very kind of confident and happy...'</i> (S5p29)
		emotional development	<i>'...[child's] emotional intelligence would have come on quite a bit...'</i> (S6p32)
		sense of reassurance for parents	<i>'...sometimes all you needed to hear was "This is normal"...they [EY staff] were always there to sort of comfort you...'</i> (S6p9)
		preparation for return to work	<i>'...I think it [EY attendance] helped her prepare, it helped me prepare her for going to crèche...'</i> (S6p24)
		widening of individual parent perspective	<i>'it pulls you out of that, that kind of previous world that you are in and...lets you see other worlds and other perspectives...'</i> (S1p34)
	Unmet Need	slotting in	<i>I thought she'd be an ideal candidate but she didn't get a place and whenever I went back to appeal it, she didn't get a place again...'</i> (S3p10)
		lack of awareness of service provision	<i>'...it's just my opinion, one of the reasons why there is so much, or a problem with post-natal depression, because people don't know the services are available to them or don't think they qualify for them...'</i> (S10p6).

Table 4.6: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Impact of Involvement' by parents in EY services (PPG1)

4.3.4.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Impact of Involvement'

The raw data collected from PPG1 parents has been coded, categorised and abstracted through constant comparison to the core category of 'Impact of Involvement'.

As referenced in earlier sections, analysis of PPG1 reports suggests that parental perception of the impact of EY services can be of huge significance. Within the PPG1 group there is evidence to suggest that, when perceived positively, it is responsible for parents seeking to become involved and maintaining their involvement in EY services. This reflects the findings of Northrop et al (2008) who concluded that 'the first few contacts influence the pattern of engagement over subsequent years' (Northrop et al, 2008, p28).

This study has shown, in addition to the impact of perception of impact of involvement in influencing that pattern of involvement, it can also influence the nature of that involvement. It also has the potential to impact on community and the broader societal, exo- and macrosystems (Snell-Johns et al, 2004), level perception of the service as the result of individual parental report to peers and the family and extended social contacts. Three sub-categories have been identified and are discussed below.

With the first sub-category '**Meeting Need**', PPG1 reports suggested a direct positive correlation between parental perception of having their identified need met and their ongoing involvement in EY services with further analysis suggesting that having a perceived need met had a direct and considerable personal impact:

'...the whole experience had...a huge effect on me personally...' (S1p32).

With the second sub-category, '**Additional Benefit**', there are consistent PPG1 parental reports of additional benefits of being involved in EY services. Benefits were described for both parent and child and had both short and long-term impact depending on their nature. Whilst there was only one specific report of personal empowerment, it is suggested that the some of the long-term impacts cited, e.g. 'the ability to cope with change' or 'widening parent perspective', could be categorised within that paradigm. This is to be noted when considering that individual empowerment is an often cited aim of parent participation policy (DfES, 2007b).

PPG1 parents also raised concerns about their perceived shortcomings of EY services in the third category: '**unmet need**'. These concerns related to the issue of access to additional more specific support. PPG1 parents reported a lack of support for two populations: i) children with additional needs and ii) mothers at risk of social isolation and mental health issues. It is concluded, based on PPG1 report, that when individual parent need goes beyond service provision on offer, a gap is created as the service is unable to meet that need and parents will cease to attend their EY service. There is no evidence from PPG1 data of EY services signposting to additional services to meet these needs.

4.3.4.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Impact of Involvement'

PPG1 reports appear to suggest that parents perceive the impact of involvement in their respective EY service positively as a result of a perception of met need and additional benefit. It is suggested that this may be facilitated by limited understanding of the nature of service provision, particularly for first-time parents: '*...particularly as your first child is entering into that process it's all very, very unknown, it's like what on earth is this process, what am I engaging with here?*' (S5p10), with a consequential restriction in ideation in relation to what to expect from engagement with an EY service.

This suggestion does appear to be substantiated by PPG1 reports regarding specific needs, e.g. post-natal depression or a child's additional needs, and their perception of a service gap when these needs are not met. This appears to point to the need for EY services to have the capacity to signpost effectively and efficiently to services which are able to address these additional needs. This will be examined through the collection of data from parents accessing a targeted service: a service-specific parent cohort (PPG2).

4.3.5 Parent Role within the EY setting

Review of EY policy highlighted a focus on the role of the parent in the EY context. A review of the literature indicated a number of studies of parent participation experience within the context of primary and secondary school settings (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Crozier, 1997; Sliwka & Istance, 2006). In relation to EY services, the literature tended to provide limited information regarding the parent role (Northrop et al, 2008; Melhuish et al, 2008). Those studies which focussed specifically on parent involvement described a consistent lack of consensus amongst service providers and service users on the issue (MacNeill, 2009). This resulted in the emergence of 'parent role within the EY setting' as a

core theme in the interview schedule for use with PPG1 participants. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 4.7.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG1 data)
Parent Role	Facilitator	opportunity to spend time with children	<i>'...I kinda really valued the time...I knew it would come to an end, you know, quick enough, be it me going back to work, be it him getting older....make the most of it basically...'</i> (S1p38)
		getting same EY experiences we did	<i>'...getting him into things that I would have done...'</i> (S10p2)
		integration into a wider social network	<i>'...[that he was] integrating from a young age and, but also for me to get out of the house and integrate with other parents as well...'</i> (S10p1)
	Skills Acquisitioner		<i>'...were very eager to listen and to learn...'</i> (S2p33)
	Co-ordinator		<i>'I wouldn't have went out of my way to call into them [EY staff] or anything...'</i> (S3p25).
	Educator		<i>'...never really thought about it...'</i> (S4p36)
	Moving between roles		Category identified by researcher

Table 4.7: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Parent Role' in EY services (PPG1)

4.3.5.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Parent Role'

The raw data collected from PPG1 parents has been coded, categorised and abstracted through constant comparison in the core category of 'Parent Role'. Five sub-categories emerged to constitute this and each will be discussed below.

Sub-category 1: Facilitator

The data collected and categorised under this sub-category shared a commonly reported perception: that PPG1 parents in this role view their involvement in EY services, alongside their children, as essential in order to ensure that the child derives maximal benefit:

‘...I do think it is important for all parents to be involved in their education because they learn from us so I think from doing the everyday stuff that I have learnt a lot that will help him too, with development basically, so I think it is important.’ (S10p15).

Sub-category 2: Skill Acquisitioner

Data analysis suggests that this role occurs in two stages: (i) parental acquisition of a new skill from EY service provider; and (ii) application of this new skill in order to benefit their child: *‘...learning a new skill...’* (S6p16).

The evidence suggests that this role, like that of the Facilitator, requires the active involvement of parents with EY services and staff as they act to acquire skills in order to meet an identified need for them to have *‘...well-educated, well-rounded children...’* (S2p57). It does appear that this role has a more specific focus on skill acquisition for the benefit of the child than the Facilitator role. In doing so, Skill Acquisition parents could be argued to have a primary role within the EY setting as they act to apply their new skills for the benefit of their child. It could be suggested that the Facilitator parent has a role secondary to that of EY staff as they act to ensure that they and their child are involved in a service which they believe will be of benefit to them.

Sub-category 3: Co-ordinator

Both the facilitator and skill acquisition roles are predicated on the premise of parental attendance and involvement. During the interviews with parents from PPG1, evidence emerged to indicate that not all parents saw a role for themselves within the EY service dynamic:

‘...I wasn’t overly involved when [C1] went, I sort of went to the door or whatever...’ (S11p3).

These parents reported their role as acting to seek and obtain services for their child:

‘...I think as a parent you are always trying to look at, what’s out there, what’s available...’ (S5p3).

Analysis suggests that all parents interested in becoming involved in EY services, do so as the result of an awareness of potential benefit of such involvement. What separates these roles is parental perception regarding their own role in order to obtain that benefit. It is

suggested that 'co-ordinator' parents do not perceive their presence in the EY context to be necessary provided their child is accessing that service.

Further, it is suggested that for Co-ordinator parents, the suggestion of their active involvement in EY services could be viewed as problematic:

'...I have to sort of see, with me working...it's kind of working out what's feasible in terms of your own personal life, demands of time and all of that other aspect...' (S5p20).

It is concluded that for those parents, they viewed their active participation in EY services as an additional drain on their time and energy and did not perceive any potential benefits from their involvement for either themselves or their child:

'...I can't do too much of the Mother and Toddler groups...' (S5p2).

There is evidence to suggest that these parents were aware that their non-involvement may impact negatively on their children:

'...I do think that you need to be involved as well...' (S3p47).

This particular parent (S3) reported the experience of not receiving her preferred service for her child as directly linked to her non-involvement as a parent:

'I know a girl who's wee boy...was given a second year on the Two Year Programme...I kinda think it more, sort of familiarity, you know, "Och, we know him and we know what his needs", you know, "Och, we'll just give him another place this year", d'ye know?...I definitely think that, maybe the parents that do go to all the wee groups or go on all the trips...they would get maybe first preference...maybe I'm not involved a lot of the time because I have other commitments...' (S3p46/47).

The evidence suggests that Co-ordinator parents make a choice, for varying reasons, not to become involved themselves in services but do act to identify and attain specific services for their children.

Sub-category 4: Educator

With both regional and national policy focus on 'Parent as Educators' (DfES, 2007b; DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b) the interview schedule did intend to actively seek data regarding this concept in order to establish how this was recognised and undertaken by PPG1 parents.

The data collected indicates that PPG1 parents did not consistently align themselves with this concept. There was a consistent lack of PPG1 parents openly or spontaneously declaring themselves to be educators able to educate and develop their children as a result of their own inherent skills.

For those that did provide reports which appeared to align with this concept, it is suggested that this is as a consequence of skill acquisition following involvement with an EY service. PPG1 parents appear to view themselves primarily as facilitators for attendance at and co-ordinators of receipt of Early Years services. Some PPG1 parents do take on the Skill Acquisition role, however, the emphasis appears to be on the 'acquisition' part of this role as parents seek to ensure that they have the adequate skill base:

'...you're learning a skill...' (S6p16);

'...I was brand new to being a mummy and there was no book came along with this little child...' (S2p2);

and:

'...she [Sure Start staff member] was teaching the way to get them to crawl and how to move them...we were all first time mums and that helped, you know, with how to do things...and advice on feeding and things...' (S4p7).

Several parents did make reference to the application of newly acquired skills as teaching: *'...you're teaching him how to do things...' (S4p37)* based on EY services which showed parents how to provide experiences *'...in a playful educational way...' (S2p12).*

Two of the 10 PPG1 parents reported a motivation of seeking specific educational experiences for their children when they first became interested in attending EY services. Their subsequent pattern of involvement with their respective EY services were that one parent was engaged in a Skill Acquisition role and the other in a Co-ordinator role. These parents reported that they wanted *'...to start developing the mind of their children from the get go. Why wait til they go to school?' (S2p32)* and hoped that their children were *'...having structured fun, structured play...' (S5p5)* which would also be an *'educational'* (S5p5) experience.

In discussing the concept of ‘Parent as Educator’, one of the PPG1 parents seeking education experiences suggests that *‘in a sense there can be a throwing back of responsibility...’* (S5p29) and concludes that:

‘I think that statement is good and positive and empowering to a point but I also think it’s slightly, it’s slightly problematic and I think it can be kind of, you know, the responsibility of that can be a little bit ‘right, ok, well who’s doing what?’ (S5p29).

This raises and highlights the issue of roles and responsibilities of education in the preschool population for government, educational services and parents. This issue is particularly pertinent given the evidence provided by PPG1 parents which suggests that some regard themselves as not having the necessary skill to be an educator:

‘...I’m not an expert in any of those things [baby yoga, baby massage etc]...’ (S6p16).

These parental attitudes have also been found to sit alongside a parental perception of the EY professional as expert:

‘...she obviously knew her stuff...she was the professional in her line...’ (S3p21).

PPG1 parents reported their role as a much more passive one than that required to fulfil an educator role:

‘...you’re just going along to sorta help him...’ (S4p20).

This is further supported by the roles identified within this sub-category. There is some evidence to suggest that the apparent reluctance to take on the ‘Parent as Educator’ role may be based on a more fundamental issue:

‘...I don’t know that all parents necessarily have the skill to be their educator...if you’re not instilled with those values and if you’re not, if you don’t ascribe to those values in every way, shape or form then you’re gonna, there’s gonna be a mismatch there...’ (S5p29).

This statement highlights another important issue for educational policymakers and Service Providers, the potential for variation amongst parents of their perception of the value of education. It is suggested that there may be subsequent tendency not to take on this role due, not to a lack of skills, but a more specific belief that education in the Early Years does not

have a role. There appears to be some support for this suggestion from evidence provided by PPG1 parents:

'...it's all about play...there's an awful lot of policies going on now where teachers have to push children, all children have to do the same thing because all children have to reach such and such a thing and I certainly believe by the time they're leaving primary school they should all be very well able to read and write, that is definitely their right to be taught, but I think at this sort of 3, 4, 5, 6 age, they are very individual and they, you know, you should allow them space to grow and play...' (S11p9).

However, when PPG1 parents were asked directly about the concept of 'Parent as Educator', whilst most reported that this was not a concept with which they were familiar, they also agreed that *'...it makes sense...'* (S4p36) and *'I would agree with that...'* (S5p29). They did go on to suggest that *'...parents probably need an element of support in that...'* (S6p29) and defined their ideation of this support as:

'...maybe things that we [parents] wouldn't have thought of doing with the kids, they [staff] "Oh, you know", now some of it's stuff that you already knew...' (S6p35).

It is suggested that the non-specific nature of their proposed EY support, as described by parents, is due more to a lack of awareness regarding the specific nature of the role of 'Parent as Educator', a subsequent lack of clarity regarding the type of support required to fulfil it and a perception of the term 'educator' as too formal for this period in their child's life.

Sub-category 5: Moving Between Roles

The data also suggested that parents move between roles in order to address needs as they arise. For example, a PPG1 parent reported actively seeking to develop new skills on becoming a first-time mum by attending a range of courses and programmes e.g. baby massage and yoga. This activity can be categorised as Skill Acquisition behaviour. This parent went on to report that she attended programmes with her child as she was *'...making sure he attends...'* (S4p20) and *'...you're just going along to sorta help him...'* (S4p20). This report can be categorised as Facilitator behaviour.

Moving between roles was commonly reported by parents within PPG1 group. This movement does appear to be due to the evolving and changing need of both parents and child in the preschool period.

4.3.5.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Parent Role'

This study provides specific detail of parent perceptions of their role in the EY dynamic absent from the literature reviewed for the purpose of this study. PPG1 parent reports suggest that they do consistently have a positive perception of the need for the involvement of their children in EY services. Their ideation in relation to their own involvement is less consistent, some parents describe a specific primary role for themselves, others report a secondary role and some parents do not recognise a role for themselves in this context at all. This information is important to consider when interpreting EY service attendance records and shaping services to meet parent need.

Further, it appears that there is limited recognition amongst PPG1 parents of their role, in the Early Years period, as an educational one. This appears to be due to a range of perceptions: their own reported lack of relevant skills, a perception of EY staff as experts, a concern regarding educational roles and responsibilities and a broader belief that education in the Early Years is not a priority for their children.

There does appear to be some evidence that as a theoretical construct, parents do support the concept of 'Parent as Educator'. However, it is suggested that PPG1 parents do not currently operate within a cultural or societal construct in which they recognise a role for themselves as educator. These issues are of particular relevance given the ongoing EY educational focus of parents as primary educators and will shape the direction of enquiry with subsequent participant groups in this study.

4.3.6 Nature of Participation

Review of EY policy indicated an ongoing policy focus, at both national and regional level, of parents as service planners and deliverers, as well as educators. A review of the literature indicated some evidence of the examination of parental experience of participation within the EY context (Vinovskis, 2005; Melhuish et al, 2008). It suggests that parents experience either non-participation or tokenistic participation in spite of some evidence of EY service structures to support parents to exert influence on service delivery e.g. parent forums or

parent involvement on management boards with one study concluding that 'there is a lack of understanding of the complex nature of parent participation which undermined the efforts of parents and staff in the development of the Sure Start programme they were engaged with' (MacNeill, 2009, p659). As a consequence the 'nature of participation experienced' emerged as a core theme in the interview schedule for use with PPG1 participants. This was used to shape examination of parent participation in universal EY services in NI in order to examine the nature of that participation and the consistency of participation opportunities provided. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 4.8.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Parent Views (samples from PPG1 data)
Parent Participation	Choosing to participate	<p><i>'... "I'm very interested in being part of Sure Start"...' (S2p1).</i></p> <p><i>'I haven't [participated] with [C3] because I just haven't had the time' (S3p13).</i></p>
	Service Provider (SP)-Service User (SU) relationship	<p><i>'...at the Christmas one I'm saying to you about, I volunteered at that...there was this other guy, he did Santa like, so we helped out with that there...just 'cos I was there, not many men, they had an employee guy lined up to do Santa as they just says "Would you help out with this here?" and one thing and another.' (S1p37).</i></p>
	Participation Opportunities	<p><i>'...I did complete surveys...but...I'd say over the four years I've been involved with them, maybe only done one or two...' (S3p22).</i></p> <p><i>'...it's important for the right people to get involved...but I don't think I'm knowledgeable enough in that area to go on a committee or, you know, to try and help develop the committee, I don't know enough about the rules and regulations...' (S10p14).</i></p>

Table 4.8: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Parent Participation' in EY services (PPG1)

4.3.6.1. Analysis of Core Category: 'Parent Participation'

Three sub-categories of 'Parent Participation' emerged from the data provided by participant response for PPG1. Analysis will now be presented of each of these.

Sub-category 1: Choosing to participate

At a fundamental level, the evidence indicates that PPG1 parents either choose to become involved or not. As discussed in Section 4.3.2, this choice is based on parent perception of need with the influence of previous personal experience and professional advice also indicated. PPG1 parent reports also suggest that, upon making the active decision to become involved, it is then necessary that the service facilitates access.

Once involved with an EY service, evidence from PPG1 parents indicates that a range of drivers work to maintain that involvement (Section 4.3.3). In order to examine the nature of this involvement and to begin to profile the extent to which this involvement exerts influence on the shape of the service itself, the label ‘participation’ is adopted by this study to describe this process. This label is taken directly from Arnstein's *‘Ladder of Participation’* (Arnstein, 1969) in which effective participation is defined as the individual having ‘the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process’ in which they are involved (Arnstein, 1969, p217). This has been identified, in Chapter 3, for use as a key comparator with PPG reports gathered by this study.

Sub-category 2: Service User (SU) - Service Provider (SP) relationship

The state of the relationship between parent and EY staff (Service User–Service Provider relationship) has previously been identified as key in maintaining parent involvement and has been discussed earlier in this chapter, Section 4.3.3, under the sub-category headings of ‘Effective Communication’, ‘sense of commonality’ and ‘Made to Feel Comfortable’. It appears that when these are experienced positively, PPG1 parents perceived this as a relationship in which there was a power balance between them and EY staff:

‘...there was no us/them...’ (S4p26).

This pattern was not consistently reported. Analysis of PPG1 parent reports on the nature of the SU-SP relationship highlighted that information flows uni-directionally from the Service Provider to Service User. This form of participation is defined by Arnstein (1969) as *‘non-participation’*. PPG1 parents appear comfortable with the unidirectional nature of this when it is perceived to meet their reported need to acquire information in order to support them and their children.

Therefore it is concluded that this form of imbalance within the SU-SP relationship works provided parent need is being met, however PPG1 parent report also suggested that where parent need is unmet, the imbalance becomes uncomfortable. For example, one PPG1 parent reported being offered an EY service for her child which was not the one which she sought. This parent reported that she *'kinda felt obliged...'* (S3p50) to accept the offered service because she *'...I kinda got the feeling that, you know, they were saying "No, take this lovely place 'cos we're doing you a favour kinda thing...'* (S3p29).

Parent report also suggests that duration of the SU-SP relationship can directly impact on the balance of that relationship due to an apparent increasing EY staff recognition of the potential contributions to be made by parents in terms of skills and experience as the relationship continues. PPG1 reports of Service Providers utilising their contributions have been categorised and labelled based on their commonalities:

- i) the utilisation of parental experiences for the purpose of supporting other newer parents;
- ii) provision of volunteering opportunities by service providers; and;
- iii) invitation to become involved at a higher level from service provider e.g. management committee.

Therefore ongoing EY service involvement appears to facilitate involvement or participation to a greater degree. For some PPG1 parents this was reported as a re-balancing of the power dynamic between parent and EY staff:

'...as I say I would have great respect from them [EY staff] and I suppose then, too, in some cases then, they started to respect you too...' (S6p19).

Sub-category 2: Service Provider (SP) - Service User (SU) relationship = Conclusion

PPG1 reports clearly indicate that parents are comfortable to be involved in an initially asymmetric relationship as long as the information that they are receiving meets a need. Further they suggest that the flow of information and advice becomes less unidirectional as the duration of the relationship increases and parents are enabled by EY staff and service structure to make contributions. The nature of the contributions made by parents as a result of the SP-SU relationship have been identified as tokenistic based on Arnstein's definitions of the different levels of participation with no reports of PPG1 parents able to shape or influence the EY service in which they are involved. Therefore it was necessary to focus on specific

participation opportunities available to PPG1 parents. This will be discussed in the next section.

Sub-category 3: Participation Opportunities

Parent reports for PPG1 parents, S1-6 and S9-10, cited participation experiences such as:

‘They’d organised like a day...where they’d the creche free and you could leave your child in the crèche and you could go upstairs and they’d laid out like a spread and we had a chat. “What other courses would you like? Anything interesting you want to do?”...not even just things for the baby, things for you...’ (S4p16).

These opportunities were coded, during data analysis, as follows:

- i) informal retrospective conversations following a programme;
- ii) formal consultation in the forms of surveys; and:
- iii) consultation event – single event.

There is also evidence of parents influencing aspects of EY programmes on an ad hoc basis e.g. the choice of location for a single gardening activity (S1p20), suggesting the need for a talk on paediatric First Aid for new mums (S2p14), whilst another parent reported that:

‘...we had asked for the baby yoga...and she says “Look, we’ll see if we can get that on the budget” and a month later we were doing baby yoga...’ (S6p21).

Arnstein (1969) describes this level of participation as ‘consultation’ and reports that, whilst it can be a legitimate step towards full participation, it does not offer any assurance that the ideas and suggestions of parents will be used. This concern appears to be upheld by PPG1 parent reports (S1-6 and S9-10). It is concluded that opportunities to influence service provision were limited to infrequent, retrospective ‘consultation’ activities which were inconsistently facilitated by EY services.

In spite of the lack of consistency of consultation and the risk that this form of participation could result in negligible impact, there was a prevailing attitude within PPG1 parents that this was worthwhile:

‘you knew that they were going to take your feedback and do something about it...’ (S4p21);

and:

‘...she took it all on board and then went and organised the stuff...’ (S4p21).

This attitude appears to be based on the widely held positive perception of EY services as reported in Section 4.3.1.

Whilst PPG1 parent reports indicate that they were content to take part in feedback activities, an interest in influencing and shaping service delivery was not a clear motivation to do so.

They appeared to have a limited perception of the purpose of this form of participation:

‘...to mak[ing] sure if it’s worthwhile or not for the next group that’s coming along...’ (S4p29);

and:

‘...maybe just the next time the course we went to was slightly better than the last time...’ (S4p29).

With one parent describing this attitude as 'passivity' (S5p26), this behaviour appears to have been replicated amongst other PPG1 parents. Based on the evidence cited it is proposed that parent 'passivity' is due to a concern about a parental lack of skills, a limited perception of the value of the activity and, most powerfully, a concern about the additional stress that becoming involved in this way could cause especially in terms of time:

‘...I have to sort of see, with me working...it’s kind of working out what’s, what’s feasible in terms of your own personal life, demands on time and all of that other aspect...’ (S5p20).

There also appears to be a concern regarding role responsibility within the EY dynamic and a concern that this would be placed upon the parent:

‘...say I went in to the, ah, [EY management] board, for example, and I said... ”what are you doing? What are you doing?” And if they can’t see that themselves without somebody coming in to them, you know what I mean? They should, they should know that. They do, they did know it. Absolutely but they don’t need me to come in and tell them that. They shouldn’t, you know, so what’s the point of me going on to a board?’ (S1p45).

This replicates the argument cited by some PPG1 parents in relation to the 'Parent as Educator' policy and discussed in Section 4.3.5.

Whilst EY policy specified the design of service structure to facilitate more parent involvement, there is also evidence to suggest that some PPG1 parents appeared to simply have no knowledge of EY structures which provide parents with the opportunity to shape and influence service provision such as Parent Forums and Management Committees:

'Don't know anything about those at all, never heard them mentioned...' (S2p29);
and:

'No, I've never, never heard anything like that...' (S3p17).

Of the first eight parents interviewed as part of PPG1, there were no parents involved at these levels. In order to gather data on the experience of parent participation at this level and facilitated by the CGT approach, two parents were recruited (S11 and S12) with a history of this type of involvement. Both parents were involved in the management committee of the preschool attended by their children at the time of interview. They were involved as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

One of these parents reports that her involvement on the management committee was as a direct result of the nature of her relationship with EY staff:

'...it was actually X [EY staff member] that approached me, I think somewhere a few months in to [C2's] preschool year, you know, "Would you think of being on the management committee?"...' (S11p3).

As well as this driver, others identified as influencing these parents to become involved at this level are: i) parent motivation to give something back; ii) socialisation opportunities; iii) a sense of commonality with the EY service; and iv) individual parent personality traits:

'...I probably am the type of person, I have been in community groups in the past...I like to be involved...' (S11p3).

These PPG1 parents do report that support was available to them to settle into these roles with one parent reporting receiving an induction whilst another found her role emerging over a prolonged period. As a result of their involvement they had clear ideation regarding the purpose of their involvement:

'...as a sounding board for frustrated staff...' (S12p4);
and:

‘...[to ensure that] the parents to have a voice...’ (S11p3).

With impact of such involvement described as being *‘...quite involved...I would know what’s going on...’ (S11p17)* and:

‘...it’s given me an interest in a community...it has given me a sense of working...it can be on my own terms and...when I have time to dedicate to it...it can keep you sane...’ (S12p18).

Therefore it appears that participation by parents at the level of management committees occurs as a result of parental choice based on motivation, provision of participation opportunities by service providers and in spite of mismatch between expected involvement and actual involvement:

‘...I was given the treasurer’s role...it was explained to me “Och, a couple of cheques now and again”...but it wasn’t...I’m a Jack of all trades...’ (S12p2).

Themes to emerge from the data which may explain the continued involvement of these parents in spite of expected versus actual involvement mismatch are a sense of ownership as a result of being involved at this engaged level and a clear ideation of the purpose of their role.

As a result of this evidence it is concluded that parents engaged at this level are able to impact on and influence decision-making in relation to staff management and fundraising but are not able to influence decision-making about service provision to them, their children and families:

‘...the only thing that management committee isn’t involved in is the actual education part...’ (S11p29).

Therefore, it is suggested that, in spite of this level of involvement, parents who may have clear ideation about preschool education, *‘...it’s about socialisation...being with other children...enjoying herself...more of a play...’ (S11p10)* cannot exercise these ideas or use them to influence service delivery. It is further suggested that involvement at management board level by PPG1 parents does not facilitate their participation beyond the tokenistic level.

Sub-category 3: Participation Opportunities = Conclusion

Data gathered from PPG1 parent reports indicates that the model of service provision experienced by parents across a broad range of Early Years services from the public, private and community/voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland is a deficit model. With the operation of a deficit model, it is proposed that there is an asymmetry to the relationship between Service User and Service Provider. Service providers assume the role of expert, providing education and advice to service users, with unidirectional information flow from provider to user (Pouliot, 2009).

There is some evidence of PPG1 parents being involved in consultation activities and on management boards which may influence service provision. Mapping these activities on to Arnstein's model of participation has shown these activities to be non- or tokenistic participation. This form of participation is defined as facilitating only limited influence for those involved. Therefore it is proposed that there is a limitation placed on the influence which PPG1 parents can exert by the service itself and at a broader macrosystem level (Snell-Johns et al, 2004). These parents are unable to promote and support their involvement at a strategic or decision-making level where they could exert real power and influence on service planning and provision. Whilst there is a clear policy agenda to involve service users, it is suggested that there remains a lag in enacting such policy at service and community level. There is also clear evidence of a broad reticence by the majority of PPG1 parents to participate at any level higher than tokenistic. This appears to be due to a lack of motivation, a concern regarding the required skill set and a restricted perception of the potential benefits of decision-making power to them and their children within this context.

4.3.6.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Parent Participation'

PPG1 reports appear to suggest that participation experienced by this group is tokenistic with no opportunities to influence service provision and delivery as advocated by EY policy. Further, it is suggested that there is limited evidence to indicate parental interest in participation beyond the level that they are currently experiencing. Both these findings reflect those of MacNeill (2009) who's findings described parents as happy to passively receive information. It is concluded that as long as these parents are receiving a service which is perceived as meeting a need, there is no motivation to be involved in the service beyond this level.

As these findings are based on reports by PPG1 parents accessing a broad range of services, it was proposed that examining these themes with parents involved in specific services would deepen understanding of the participation process. Therefore this was identified as key area of enquiry with parents recruited to subsequent groups.

4.4 Summary of PPG1 findings:

This chapter has presented analysis of data acquired from PPG1 parents involved in a range of EY services across NI. A number of core categories were identified through the coding, memoing and constant comparison process of CGT analysis. These will now be considered in light of the original research objectives in order to begin to formulate constructs to explain the participation behaviours of parents in EY settings. These are presented in Table 4.9.

Research Objective	PPG1 findings	Categories for Ongoing Consideration
1) To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	<p>i) The nature of participation consistently experienced by PPG1 parents in EY services across Northern Ireland is at the tokenistic or non-participation level (Arnstein, 1969);</p> <p>ii) Parents consistently reported a lack of interest in becoming involved at higher participation levels due to reported lack of knowledge/awareness of the possibility of increasing participation levels, reported concern regarding a perceived lack of skill set in order to do so and a perception of higher participation as an additional responsibility;</p> <p>iii) There is inconsistent evidence to indicate that ongoing parental attendance at EY services, with strong SU-SP relationships, can facilitate involvement at higher involvement levels e.g. management board but that their influence remains 'tokenistic'.</p>	<p>i) PPG1 parents were recruited from across a range of EY NI services. Based on the findings of tokenistic and/or non-participation by PPG1 parents, it was considered useful to examine participation within a single service setting with a clearly defined protocol for parent participation: Rainbow Sure Start.</p> <p>ii) With PPG1 report of lack of parent awareness of participation opportunities, it was considered useful to examine parent attitude to participation within a service with a clearly defined protocol/service structure for this: Rainbow Sure Start.</p> <p>iii) With PPG1 report of tokenistic participation whilst involved at higher involvement levels, it was considered useful to examine parent participation on parent forum/management board and the impact of that participation within a single service setting with a clearly defined protocol/service structure for this: Rainbow Sure Start.</p>
2) To discover the impact of participation on parent involvement activity.	<p>i) Parents do not consistently recognise a role for their own direct involvement in EY services alongside their children;</p> <p>ii) Participation level does not directly inform parent involvement activity and the evidence suggests that PPG1 parents do not recognise the role of participation in driving their own involvement activity;</p> <p>iii) The impact of direct, regular and ongoing involvement of parents in EY settings (at tokenistic/non-participation level) is perceived to have a positive impact for parents and children with some reports of perceived additional benefit which acts to ensure continued parental involvement.</p>	<p>i) The PPG1 findings of a lack of consistency in parental perception of the need for their own involvement could be validated by examination of this theme in a single service setting with a clear policy of promoting direct parent involvement.</p> <p>ii) PPG1 parent involvement in EY services is driven primarily by parental need + personal experience (+ professional advice). It was considered useful to validate these findings from data provided by parents involved in a single service setting with a clear policy of promoting direct parent involvement.</p> <p>iii) It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings of participation, regardless of level, as perceived positively by parents within a single service setting.</p>

<p>3) To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services.</p>	<p>i) Parent Involvement in EY services has been identified as a two stage process: initial interest in attending EY services; and maintaining involvement in EY services;</p> <p>ii) Initial interest in attending EY services occurs as result of the following drivers: self-motivation as a result of identified need; parental capacity for self-help; personal experience; community level service information provision; professional advice and service access;</p> <p>iii) There is limited evidence of parental interest in EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education for their child(ren);</p> <p>iv) The driver, self-motivation, has been found to be the most powerful of parent initial interest in EY services however there is evidence to suggest that parents find it easier to accept standard EY service provision rather than try to negotiate with services in order to obtain the specific service they require;</p> <p>v) Parents with limited family/social support are at risk of obtaining inaccurate service access information at either a community level and/or via healthcare professionals with a consequent negative impact;</p> <p>vi) Maintaining parent involvement in EY services occurs as a result of the following drivers: effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality and meeting need; and a negative experience of any of these drivers results in parent withdrawal from the service.</p>	<p>i) It was considered that the two stage process of participation identified from PPG1 data could be validated by findings from a single service setting.</p> <p>ii) It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings in relation to drivers of 'initial interest' by examining this within a single service setting with a particular focus on impact of negative experience of any/all of these drivers.</p> <p>iii) It was considered useful to establish whether the lack of interest reported by PPG1 parents in education within the preschool setting, is validated by findings from parents involved with a single service setting which has a stated policy focus of 'Parent as Educator'.</p> <p>iv) It was considered useful to validate the findings of PPG1 parents by examining parental experience of need and service provision within a single service setting.</p> <p>v) It was considered useful to validate the findings of PPG1 parents by examining service information provision, its sources and the accuracy of this information within a single service setting.</p> <p>vi) It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings in relation to drivers of 'maintaining involvement' by examining this within a single service setting with a particular focus on impact of negative experience of any/all of these drivers.</p>
<p>4) To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role.</p>	<p>Whilst there is evidence of broad support for the theoretical construct of 'parent as educator', there is limited evidence that parents perceive this as their role with reported concerns in relation to inadequate skill set and reluctance to take on the perceived additional responsibility.</p>	<p>It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings in relation to parent perceptions of the role of 'Parent as Educator' within a single service setting which has a stated policy focus on this.</p>

<p>5) To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services.</p>	<p>i) Parents do perceive a role for themselves within the EY dynamic variously as Facilitator, Skills Acquisitioner or Co-ordinator with varying degrees of direct involvement with the EY service and with the capacity to shift between roles depending on perceived need;</p> <p>ii) There is a consistent lack of evidence to indicate that parents perceive their role either during their child(ren)'s preschool years and/or within the EY dynamic as that of an educator;</p> <p>iii) The perception/or lack of perception of 'parent as educator' is not a driver in parental choice to become involved in EY services.</p>	<p>i) It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings in relation to parent roles identified by examining these within a single service context which has a stated policy focus on 'Parent as Educator'.</p> <p>ii) It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings in relation to parent role as educator identified by examining these within a single service context which has a stated policy focus on 'Parent as Educator'.</p> <p>iii) It was considered useful to validate PPG1 findings in relation to lack of perception of 'parent as educator' as a driver of becoming involved with EY services, within a single service context which has a stated policy focus on 'Parent as Educator'.</p>
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Table 4.9: Summary of findings from PPG1 mapped across to the original research objectives with areas for further consideration outlined

The first stage of analysis in this study is the consideration of findings from PPG1. These are summarised in Table 4.9 and are a broad overview of key relevant themes and issues. PPG1 findings support and contribute further specification to a number of EY participation studies reviewed in Phase 1 of this study (Northrop et al, 2008; MacNeill, 2009; Malin & Morrow, 2008). The PPG1 findings have been mapped to the original research objectives. They have been reviewed in order to identify areas for ongoing consideration. Given the range of EY services accessed, it was proposed that these PPG1 findings could be used to formulate core themes for use in interviews with parents recruited from a single EY service with a stated policy focus on 'parent participation' and 'parent as educator'. It was anticipated that data collected from this group would verify PPG1 and literature review findings, further specify them and potentially identify others of equal significance. Results and analysis of findings from interviews conducted with parents recruited from this single service setting (PPG2) will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis of Data for Parent Participation Group 2 (PPG2)

Word Count: 18,663

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter will present and discuss findings from the analysis of the experience of parents registered with a single Level 2 targeted Sure Start service in Northern Ireland and recruited to Parent Participation Group 2 (PPG2).

As previously stated, from analysis of PPG1 data, a number of key categories emerged. Given the range of EY services being accessed by PPG1 parents, in some cases more than one service at a time, it was important to verify these emerging categories in order to integrate these into a theory which provides a satisfactory explanation for the focus of this study: parent participation. Cognisant of the policy focus on both 'parent participation' and 'parent as educator', alongside literature review findings of either limited information on the implementation of participation (Northrop et al, 2008; Melhuish et al, 2008) or reports of mixed effectiveness of such implementation (MacNeill, 2009), it was decided that examining parent involvement in a single EY service underpinned by such policy would produce data which could verify these categories, densify them and identify new service-specific categories.

The Sure Start service, a UK Labour government flagship initiative introduced in 1998, was developed in response to a recognition of an increase in disadvantage amongst preschool children alongside an evidence-based conviction that intervention in the pre-school period could ameliorate this in both the long and short term (Glass, 1999). One of its key components was that it was to be responsive to local community need and be ‘...“owned” by local parents, local communities and those who worked in the programme...because those who would benefit would be able to shape it to do what they wanted, rather than it being done to, or for, them...’ (Glass, 2005) (cited by Melhuish & Hall, 2007, p10).

This ‘shaping’ was to be enacted through the formation of local partnerships between service providers and a range of stakeholders including health, social services, education, the private sector, the voluntary sector and parents with central government guidance stating that Sure Start programmes must ‘promote the participation of all local families in the design and working of the programme’ (SSU, 1998, p37) (cited by Melhuish & Hall, 2007, p13).

In Northern Ireland, the recently published *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* echoes this with its stated aim of improving the wellbeing of children and young people through a partnership approach with stakeholders from a range of statutory, private and voluntary agencies involved with children and young people and includes parents (NIE, 2016b).

Sure Start programmes in NI offer a core range of health, education, childcare, play and parent support and are managerially overseen by Childcare Partnership NI. Some of the core principles for NI Sure Start programmes are to 'actively encourage the participation of the family in learning and development opportunities' and to 'value the role of parent as first educator' (DE, 2013, p3). Guidance to NI Sure Start programmes does not stipulate the direct involvement of children, parents and families in the planning, design and implementation of the service in spite of the advocacy of such an approach by its overarching management bodies.

The single Sure Start service involved in this study is Rainbow Sure Start (RSS) based in Castlederg, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. It provides an EY service to a mainly rural area of approximately 225 square miles with a population of approximately 11,000 (www.childcarepartnerships-ni.org) covering three regions: Castledawson, Drumquin and Newtownstewart. It serves 5 electoral wards which have all been categorised as belonging to 25% most deprived wards in NI based on Multiple Deprivation Measures (CP, 2011) with three wards fitting into 20% of NI's most deprived wards. It provides a broad range of services to families of children under 4 years old across this geographical region. Within this single service context, a number of PPG1 emergent categories were to be validated by PPG2. The core themes derived for use with PPG2, based on PPG1 data, are presented in Table 5.1.

Research Objectives	Key PPG1 findings	Core Themes of PPG2 Interviews
To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tokenistic participation • Non-participation • Limited evidence of parent participation at the 'citizen control' level • Limited interest in 'citizen control' level of participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation • Parent experience of 'citizen control' level of participation • Parent interest in participation at 'citizen control' level
To discover the impact of that participation experience on parent involvement activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent recognition of need for parental involvement in EY services • Participation level not directly related to parent involvement activity • Positive impact of direct, regular and ongoing involvement (at tokenistic/non-participation levels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude to role of direct parental involvement • Relationship between participation and parent involvement activity • Perception of impact of parent involvement activity
To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement is a two-stage process: becoming involved and maintaining involvement • Becoming involved as a result of self-motivation due to identified need, parental capacity for self-help, personal experience, community level service information provision, professional advice and service access • Difficulty in obtaining specific service to meet specific parental need • Limited interest in involvement as a means to obtain preschool education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement process • Drivers of Becoming involved • Drivers of Maintaining Involvement • Meeting of additional need • Interest in EY service provision as educational • Drivers of risk of non-involvement for families

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining involvement as the result of effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality and meeting need and a negative experience of any of these drivers results in parent withdrawal from the service • Parents with limited family/social network support at risk of obtaining inaccurate service access information 	
To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad theoretical support • Limited parental perception of this as their role • Parental concerns about limited skill base • Parental reluctance to take on 'additional responsibility' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental perception of theoretical construct • Parental interest in taking on this role • Barriers/facilitators to taking on this role
To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of levels of direct parent involvement • Three parent roles identified: Facilitator, Co-ordinator and Skills Acquisitioner • Limited evidence of 'Parent as Educator' role • 'Parent as Educator' not a driver of becoming involved/maintaining involvement in EY services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of parent involvement • Parent roles undertaken • Evidence of 'Parent as Educator'

Table 5.1: A summary of the original study research objectives, the findings from PPG1 and the resultant core interview themes for PPG2.

As well as the opportunity to gather data from a sub-population of parents attending an EY service with a clearly stated policy agenda for 'parent participation' and 'parent as educator' there was also the chance to closely examine parent involvement activity. Whilst broad information on parent involvement activity had been gathered from PPG1, it had not been possible to obtain an overview of that activity because of the range of services accessed and the format of that service provision. With the PPG2 population, this was possible due to the availability of parent attendance records.

As discussed on Section 3.7.3 of Chapter 3, theoretical sampling was used in order to focus on the core findings from PPG1 and the gaps identified as outlined above in Table 5.1. Inclusion/exclusion criteria were developed and a stratified sampling process applied to the RSS family registration database. This was used in order to identify patterns of parent activity. Anonymised attendance records were examined and individual parent registrants were grouped into categories and labelled as either 'registered, active' or 'registered, inactive' based on whether they attended more or less than 5 activities over the period April 2012 until October 2013. This number of attendances was dictated by a review of the parent attendance records over the service and the observation of a clear differentiation of parent attendance into two groups, registered, consistent and frequent attenders and registered consistent infrequent attenders.

Anonymised service registration lists were stratified according to attendance patterns (Registered Active or Registered Inactive) and location, and random sampling applied to these subgroups in order to identify 20 potential participants for invitation to interview. This number of prospective invitees was identified in order to accommodate attrition and ensure that 10 interviews were gathered.

Upon identification of potential participants, a written letter of invitation, jointly developed and signed by the researcher and Sure Start manager, was posted to them along with a sheet of information about the study. A follow-up phone call was made in order to provide any additional information or clarification of information, as required, and to answer any questions in order to ensure parent attendance. The researcher was always careful to mention the Sure Start manager's name and emphasise the service co-operation in order to facilitate the introduction of both herself and the project.

The purpose of this was to move the researcher beyond the status of stranger to the potential participant by highlighting the connection between her and the service in order to begin to develop reciprocity and facilitate a positive experience for the participant as well as ensure the collection of rich data. This was necessary as the researcher acknowledges that she had no prior knowledge of any potential PPG2 participants. This reciprocity was further strengthened by the provision of opportunity for the interview to be conducted in the individual parent's local Sure Start facility or home.

Whilst the researcher was unfamiliar with individual RSS parents, she was familiar with the service provision and staffing structure as a result of her professional experience as a paediatric Speech and Language Therapist.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 parents recruited to PPG2 either in their home or in their local Sure Start facility depending on their preference.

Analysis was conducted on 10 of the interviews collected due to time constraints. These interviews were selected for analysis to reflect the numbers of interviewees recruited from across the three regions served by RSS. The ratio of recruits for the areas Drumquin, Castledawson and Newtonstewart was: 2:2:1. Five interviews with parents identified as Registered Active and five interviews with parents identified as Registered Inactive were randomly selected on a 2:2:1 basis from across these areas and analysed using a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach.

PPG2 data was collected subsequent to the collection, coding and analysis of PPG1 data. The process was completed in this sequential manner in order to: i) identify service-specific emerging themes; and ii) to facilitate comparison of PPG2 findings with PPG1 and identify commonalities and differences.

As previously discussed, a social constructivist paradigm is applied in this study, in which the researcher takes an active role in recognising that parent reports are their interpreted realities and interpreting what parents do not report or comprehend (Gomm, 2004).

The constant comparison approach outlined for PPG1 data analysis was employed in the analysis of PPG2 data with the researcher taking account of core themes identified in both

Phase 1 and PPG1 analysis of Phase 2. Initial coding was applied to all PPG2 data, in the same way as PPG1, using Line-by-Line analysis. Focussed coding then identified the most frequent or significant codes and facilitated comparison with PPG1 analysis findings. Data interpretation and comparisons were recorded in the form of memos as used for PPG1.

As with PPG1, demographic information revealed by PPG2 parents during their interviews is outlined in Table 5.2. It is suggested that the disclosure of this information by parents indicates the relevance of it to the topics discussed in the interview and therefore it is assumed to directly inform their reported perceptions and ideations.

PPG2 members	Sex	Level of Activity	Current Parental Status	Initial EY Involvement	RSS Programmes attended	Additional Needs of Children
DRA1	F	RA	Working mum – fulltime – recently returned to work	During pregnancy	Hypno-birthing Baby massage Baby reflexology Rhythm & Rhyme	None
DRA2	F	RA	Working mum – fulltime – recently returned to work – also at college	Child was 6 months old	Parent & Toddler group	None
CRA1	F	RA	Teenage mum (with first child) – now a stay-at-home mum	Involvement with previous daughter (6)	Attended Young Parents group & this time Hypno-birthing, massage, reflexology, Incredible Babies	None
CRA2	F	RA	On maternity leave – due to return to work fulltime	During pregnancy (approx 1 year ago)	‘Everything’ – infant massage and reflexology, Rhythm kids, breastfeeding group, Baby Start	None
NRA1	F	RA	Working before birth & now a stay-at-home mum	During pregnancy (first child)	Hypno-birthing, baby massage, baby reflexology, Rhythm kids, nurturing class, Cook IT class	None

PPG2 members	Sex	Level of Activity	Current Parental Status	Initial EY Involvement	RSS Programmes attended	Additional Needs of Children
DRI1	F	RI	Working mum – nurse – mother of 6 children – returned to work approx 1 year ago	Involved with at least 3 previous children	Previously attended Baby massage, Rhythm & Rhyme Currently using drop-in services (poor recall of specific services)	None
DRI2	F	RI	Stay-at-home mum – 2 yr old + a newborn	Recommended by midwife	Prenatally: Pregnancy Yoga Baby massage, Baby Start, Nurturing Programme, Cook It classes, TYOP	Unclear
CRI1	F	RI	2 children – currently a Stay-at-home mum – previously a Teacher	Recommended by Health Visitor (Recently made redundant & separated from husband)	CRI1's mother very actively involved with first child	Recently made redundant & separated from husband
CRI2	F	RI	Social Worker on mat leave – first child (13 wks)	Professional knowledge of SS service	Hypno-birthing, infant massage, reflexology, Baby Start & breast-feeding group, weaning workshops	None
NRI2	F	RI	Mother of 1 – teenage mum – working part time – pregnant again	Social network	Daughter involved in TYOP	Unclear

RA = Registered Active (parents who have attended more than 5 activities between April 2012 and October 2013 based on service activity records)

RI = Registered Inactive (parents who have attended less than 5 times between April 2012 and October 2013 based on service activity records)

TYOP = Two Year Old Programme; SS = Sure Start

D = Drumquin; C = Castledawson; N = Newtownstewart

Table 5.2: Summary of Demographic Information for Parents in PPG2

5.2 Summary of Results: Emerging Core Categories for PPG2

Table 5.3 presents a summary of core interview themes and the resultant categories and sub-categories which describe the events, experiences and perceptions reported by parents in relation to their registration with Rainbow Sure Start.

Core Interview Themes for PPG2	Emergent Core Categories (based on PPG2)	Sub-categories
Perception of RSS	Parent perspectives	Positive perception; Positive perception of the Sure Start service
EY service 'involvement' process	Two stage process	Becoming involved Maintaining involvement
Drivers of initial interest	Internal drivers External drivers	Community level RSS service knowledge; Service access; Free service; Proximity; Flexibility; Self-motivation; Capacity for Self-Help; Professional Advice.
Drivers of maintaining involvement	Internal drivers External drivers	Effective communication; Made to feel comfortable; Sense of Commonality; Meeting need; Wider family involvement.
Drivers of risk of non-involvement	Risk of non-involvement	Being a Working Mum; Lack of age appropriate services for children; Accommodating more than one preschool child; Programme Booking; Postcode dependent service access; Private Sector Wraparound Childcare Provision
Perception of impact of parent involvement activity	Additional benefit	Child development; child enjoyment; Development of self-confidence (child); Improving independence; Increased self-confidence (parent); Extended family involvement; Change of perspective.
Meeting additional need	Nil evidence of unmet need	
Nature of parent involvement		
Parent roles		Facilitator; Skills Acquisition; Co-ordinator.

'Parent as Educator' (PaE)	Recognition of 'Parent as Educator' role	
Parent perception/interest in the 'PaE' construct	Recognition of 'Parent as Educator' role	
Barriers/facilitators to taking on the role of 'Parent as Educator'	Perception of full undertaking	
EY service as provider of preschool education	Parent as preschool educator	
Relationship between participation level and parent involvement activity	N/A	
Level of participation	Inadequate participation	Non-participation Tokenistic participation
Parent interest in/experience of 'citizen control'	Limited interest in/experience of 'citizen control'	Limited experience of 'citizen control' Limited interest in 'citizen control'
Parent attitude to direct parent involvement in EY service	Positive attitude to need for parent involvement	

Table 5.3: Summary of Core Interview themes and resultant categories and sub-categories for PPG2

All 10 parents selected for analysis attended only Rainbow Sure Start. Whilst 22 interviews were available for analysis, time constraints prevented the use of the additional 12. With the 'zigzag' process of 'interview-code-analyze-review', the researcher is confident that categories and sub-categories were saturated as no new codes were derived from the data upon completion of analysis of the tenth recruit's interview.

Whilst patterns of parent attendance were recorded, differentiation was not made of the themes derived from PPG2 analysis according to parental pattern of attendance i.e. Registered Active, Registered Inactive (as applied in recruitment process). Analysis of all 10 PPG2 reports was conducted irrespective of ascribed attendance pattern in order to ensure that themes emerge as fully as possible from analysis. The remainder of this chapter will present further results and detailed analysis of the findings summarised in Table 5.3.

5.3 Detailed Presentation of Results and Analysis for PPG2:

5.3.1 Perceptions of Rainbow Sure Start (RSS)

PPG2 parental perspectives of Rainbow Sure Start, irrespective of pattern of attendance, were consistently positive: *'I thought it was great like...just found it really useful...'* (DRAp1). In this context, positive references to staff were frequently made *'...the girls that work there are top notch...'* (DRI2p11) and:

'...I always find the Sure Start staff very, very friendly, very approachable and very professional...they are evidently always following protocols...the way in which any one of them speaks to you, you know that they are always coming from exactly the same...training room and the same approach...' (CRI1p6).

There was also evidence indicating that the Sure Start name and label was regarded by PPG2 parents as an indication of a level of professionalism and effective service:

'...as soon as mum [grandmother] knew that Sure Start were starting to become involved in the Ballycolman one [playgroup] on a Monday, she was up there like a shot, she was like 'I want to take him now on a Monday because Sure Start are getting involved'...' (CRI1p21).

5.3.2 Becoming Involved in RSS

This was originally identified as a core interview theme for PPG1 in order to understand the process more fully. Whilst a range of drivers of 'becoming involved' were identified for this

group, as discussed in Section 4.3.2, these were obtained from parents attending a range of universal services and, in some cases, more than one service at a time. It was decided that it would be useful to consider this theme with parents who all attend the same service, are not accessing any other services, and one which is backed by EY policy with a 'parent participation' and 'parent as Educator' focus.

In this section there will be consideration of the raw data from PPG2 interviews obtained in relation to 'becoming involved' and its subsequent analysis. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 5.4.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG2 data)
Becoming involved in Rainbow Sure Start (RSS)	Community level RSS knowledge	Physical location	'...I always knew the building was there...' (CRA2p1)
		Peer service knowledge/experience	'...a lot of people talking about it [Sure Start], our friends would talk about it, so it would be something you would always, you'd fall into it anyway and find out about from other mums...' (CRI1p3).
		Contact with relevant healthcare professionals	'...when I got pregnant with my first wee girl, my midwife would have informed me...she pointed me in the direction of that [Sure Start building] for ante-natal classes so that's how I originally got signed up and then from then on I've been getting the newsletters...to see what's available...Baby Start or baby massage...' (DRI2p1)
		Service information via external sources	'...I found it [contact details for Sure Start] ok obviously cos I had the Internet...' (DRA2p4) '...[I] just heard about it [Sure Start] on the news...' (NRA1p1) and '...very in the media...' (CRI1p3) '...I do think there's posters up in the doctors...' (DRA2p5)
	Service Access		'...it's easy to register, cos all you have to do is pop in here or ring them or, you know, it's not hard...' (CRA1p5)
	Free Service	Free Service	'...the fact that...the service is free...that is invaluable that they can offer these services free...' (DRI2p2) '...the service is good...especially when it's free...' (DRA2p13) '...it's free...it doesn't matter sort of your income or anything like that...' (DRA1p4)
		Giving something back	'...I done the Parent Forum with [EY Leader] a couple of weeks ago...I think it's important...mainly because they give their time out to benefit me so any help that I can give to benefit them...because it's free and it's great for the mother and it's so good for the child...' (CRA2p6/16)

	Proximity		<i>'...you'd be mad not to avail of it when it's beside you...'</i> (DRI2p9)
	Flexibility		<i>'...it was more just the meeting type of ones that we kinda went to because you could kinda drop into them...'</i> (DRI1p11)
	Professional Advice		<i>'...she [Health Visitor] says maybe it's good for me to get out, to join other groups and that and I think she brought up Sure Start...'</i> (DRA2p4)
	Self-motivation		<i>'...I suppose being pregnant and I just didn't know what was ahead of me, I wanted to kinda get an idea of what was happening so I went to the antenatal classes...kinda broadened my horizons as to what it was about, before that I honestly didn't really know anything about...any children's services because I was not involved with children...'</i> (DRI2p2)
		Socialisation opportunities for parents	<i>'...you're in the house on your own...it was good to get out and speak to other parents that were maybe in the same boat...'</i> (DRI2p3)
		Socialisation opportunities for children	<i>'...I wanted him to interact more with other children...all he seen was adults...'</i> (DRA2p2)
		Need for advice, support and reassurance	<i>'...[C1] was sorta the youngest so I was able to...see the other babies and, you know, "Oh like, what are they doing?" and, even with the other mums, I was like "How many feeds...is your baby doing a day?"...'</i> (DRA1p3) <i>'...I would have went to any class at all that was going to give me information...'</i> (DRA1p8) <i>'...it made me feel...that there was somebody else there for you...'</i> (DRA1p23)
		Time for self	<i>'...you can leave the child in for a couple of hours...'</i> (DRA2p1)
		Not being from the area	
	Capacity of Self-Help		<i>'I found it okay obviously cos I had the Internet so I just looked up myself...but I didn't know the dates and times [of Sure Start programmes], it was a girl who works with Sure Start so I Facebooked her to see when it was opening again...'</i> (DRA2p4)

Table 5.4: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Becoming Involved in Rainbow Sure Start'

5.3.2.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Becoming Involved in Rainbow Sure Start'

Eight sub-categories of 'becoming involved in Rainbow Sure Start' emerged from the data provided by participant response for PPG2. Once coded and categorised, they were re-categorised loosely based on Snell-Johns et al's ecological framework (2004), according to whether they were 'internal' or 'external' to the individual. This re-categorisation is indicated in Table 5.4 by colour coding of the boxes for 'sub-categories'. Those coloured 'yellow' have been categorised as 'internal' drivers of parental interest and those categorised 'green' as 'external' drivers.

In this way they follow the same pattern identified for PPG1 with a series of internal and external drivers acting, with varying degrees of impact, to cause parents to become involved in an EY service. PPG2 data reflects four of the six sub-categories identified for PPG1 parents (Self-motivation, capacity for self- help, professional advice and service access). PPG2 have added further service-specific detail to the sub-category identified for PPG1 as 'Information provision (community level)'. It has been labelled as 'Community level Sure Start service knowledge' for PPG2 based on this additional service specific data. PPG2 data analysis also produced three additional sub-categories not identified for PPG1: 'free service', 'proximity' and 'flexibility of service'.

Sub-category 1: Community Level Sure Start Service knowledge

This was identified as one of two of the most powerful drivers of 'becoming involved', along with 'Service Access' which will be discussed later. A number of factors have been identified as contributing to this knowledge, and received initial codes in the early data analysis process. They are summarised in Table 5.4 and are presented below.

Rainbow Sure Start, as previously discussed, serves a small rural community across three villages and townlands in Northern Ireland. PPG2 reports indicate that this is a service that was widely known and recognised within the community as a result of its **physical location**. **Peer service knowledge/experience** was also identified with PPG2 parents frequently reporting that they received information about RSS by '*...word of mouth...*' (DRI1p1) from those they were in close social contact with and who were involved with the service:

'...from my sisters with their children...' (NRI2p1).

This awareness of the service by prospective service users appears, based on PPG2 report, to be further developed during **contact with relevant healthcare professionals** who acted as advocates for the service. These advocates were either healthcare professionals e.g. Health Visitors and midwives or Sure Start staff with the majority of PPG2 parents reporting becoming registered with the service through their contact with their midwife in the antenatal period. This appears to have been facilitated by reports of visible interfacing between Sure Start staff and statutory healthcare staff:

‘...when I was expecting [C1] even going to the midwife, some of the Sure Start ladies were there talking about courses and are you registered...’ (CRA2p17).

This evidence suggests a sense of cohesion between Rainbow Sure Start and statutory antenatal services which was visible to prospective Service Users and which appears to have supported parents to become involved and reinforced the perception of RSS registration as part of standard practice. This experience was not reported by PPG1 parents and appears to be a 'service-specific' trait.

Community knowledge was reported to be further enhanced by the accessibility of **service information via external sources** e.g. the Internet, the media and traditional advertising.

There was also a single parent report of service knowledge as a result of her profession:

‘...I was aware of it...within my work...I’m a Social Worker so we would be pointing parents and advising parents to go into Sure Start services...if you’re doing that, you kinda do it yourself as well so you do...’ (CRI2p1).

There was a single PPG2 parental report of issues relating to the timing of information provision:

‘...I had missed...the first class of the hypno-birthing so you’re sort of always trying to catch up...if I had been told maybe sooner...that would have helped me...’ (DRA1p7).

There is a lack of evidence to suggest that this was a persistent or ongoing issue for PPG2 parents.

There is clear and consistent evidence of an awareness of and knowledge about RSS within the wider community and among potential service users. This has been categorised as an external driver and has also been found, based on PPG2 reports, to be powerful enough to cause some PPG2 parents to override the influence of their own personal experience. For

example, CRA2 reported that *'...my mum was at home with us...all the time...'* (CRA2p10) but that she chose to *'...kinda go to everything...'* (CRA2p1) because *'...my sister...she's a member of another Sure Start...she had talked about [it]...it was my sister who got me involved...'* (CRA2p1/2). This differs from PPG1 parents who described personal experience as a key internal driver in parents becoming involved in EY services.

Whilst for PPG1 parents, 'Personal Experience' has been described as a key internal driver in parents becoming involved in EY services, there is a lack of evidence of it amongst PPG2 parents. Therefore it is suggested that 'community level Sure Start service knowledge' is powerful enough to override the influence of 'personal experience' within this group. There is a further difference between PPG1 and PPG2 parents reports: PPG2 reports do not consolidate PPG1 findings of high variation in the range of service information available at community level and the accuracy of that information.

There is consistency across PPG1 and PPG2 in relation to a lack of specific knowledge about the nature of the Sure Start service itself. This is evidenced by the repeated reference of PPG2 parents to the Two Year Old Programme and their enthusiasm to get on it:

'...the Two Year Old Programme...I would love to get [C1] into...I don't want her missing out on the social interaction of other kids...' (NRA1p11).

This enthusiasm appears to be matched by a consistent lack of understanding in relation to the purpose of the programme amongst those PPG2 parents:

'...they're saying it's very hard to get into...I've been to every single class you can go to and they said that doesn't matter...I think it [access] should be based or partly based on how many classes you have been to...it is unfair to people who have took time out and made the effort to come to all these services to not then get their child in...' (NRA1p11/12).

Sub-category 1: Community Level Sure Start Service knowledge = Conclusion

It is concluded that within a 'service-specific' context in a finite location, community level knowledge of the service is easily accessible, via healthcare professionals, RSS staff and/or peers, accurate and supports prospective participants to engage with the service. It is suggested that this is due to the visibility of the service within the community and the clear

and visible links with statutory services e.g. NHS midwives and Health Visitors. This differs from the reported experiences of PPG1 parents.

Within this 'service-specific' context, prospective parent participants continue to lack clear, accurate and specific ideation about the nature of various programmes and activities within the service.

Sub-category 2: Service Access

The next data derived sub-category to be identified within 'Becoming involved in Rainbow Sure Start' is 'Service Access'. This external driver is consistently reported by PPG2 parents:

'...I just rung the number and then somebody came out to see me...brought me out...the bag that you get and the wee introduction pack...' (DRA2p4).

There is some evidence of access impacted by the introduction of a new access criteria based on postcodes:

'...it's a bit of a postcode lottery, I suppose with it because I know my sisters up at home are not eligible for Sure Start because of where we live...' (CRI2p10).

This criteria restricts access to those living within an area as defined by postcode.

It should be noted that the decision in relation to the introduction of a new service access criteria was made at strategic service management level with individual Sure Start services then responsible for implementing this at operational level. There is also evidence to suggest that individual services attempted to provide individualised support within the constraints of these new criteria:

'...I know that where they could, they slotted me in to a few classes because they knew that I was maybe struggling with some issues at home...' (CRI1p6).

Sub-category 2: Service Access = Conclusion

PPG2 provide evidence of consistent ease of access to RSS. The evidence also suggests that this external driver is directly dependent on 'community level Sure Start service knowledge'. This finding differs from PPG1 reports where parental experiences of trying to access EY services were highly variable as a consequence of the variation of the availability of EY service information and accuracy of that information.

There were no PPG2 reported negative perceptions in relation to individual RSS service access. There is evidence of negative ideation in relation to the imposition of postcode-based access criteria at strategic level however there is also reported recognition by PPG2 parents that this was not imposed by RSS.

Sub-category 3: Free Service

Analysis of PPG2 reports identified three ‘new’ external drivers of parent interest, not identified with PPG1, with ‘free service’ the most consistently reported of them:

‘...because it was a free service probably initially was the big catch...it wasn’t going to be an outlay or it wasn’t going to be that type of commitment...’ (CRI1p4).

Evidence of the power of this driver is provided by comments made by several PPG2 parents who cited it as a reason for becoming involved in RSS and questioned why more parents weren’t availing of it because of this:

‘...I can’t understand why a lot more people don’t use the services...because it’s free...’ (CRA2p16); and:

‘...I don’t know why more people don’t [attend]...it’s free...’ (DRA1p4).

It is suggested that the identification of this driver for the PPG2 population, and not for the PPG1 group, is as a result of the mix of EY services being accessed by PPG1 parents from across the public, private and voluntary sectors with a significant cost variable. Whilst 6 of the 10 PPG1 parents were accessing a free Sure Start service, they were often also accessing additional fee-paying EY services. The cost variable for these other EY services was not discussed in detail with this group. It is suggested that as a result of this the theme of ‘free service’ was not drawn out in the subsequent GT analysis.

In spite of this, there is some PPG1 evidence of parental awareness and appreciation of Sure Start’s free service:

‘...as [wife] said, this was a free service, wasn’t costing us anything...’ (S9F, p24).

There is evidence to suggest that there was an impact of parental knowledge of this as a free service from both PPG groups. This impact appears to be a parental preference to ‘give something back’:

‘...the fact that...the service is free...that is invaluable that they can offer these services free...I took the opportunity to go [to the Parent Forum] and tell them that this was great for me...I try and give a wee bit back to them ‘cos I know what they’ve given me over time...’ (DRI2p2/8).

This is evidenced across both PPG groups however it is more consistently reported by PPG2 parents. Rainbow Sure Start covers five electoral wards, three of which have been categorised as falling into the 20% most deprived wards in NI based on Multiple Deprivation Measures (2010) whilst the other two wards are categorised as falling within 25% most deprived wards in NI (CP, 2011). Given the electoral ward demographic, it is unsurprising that the free service offered by RSS is such a powerful ‘service-specific’ driver.

Sub-category 3: Free Service = Conclusion

The perception of RSS as a free service is a consistently reported driver of PPG2 parent interest in becoming involved in it. The researcher has interpreted this as a powerful ‘new’ external ‘service-specific’ driver as it was not identified by PPG1 group. PPG2 also consistently wish to ‘give something back’ to the service in return. Whilst not particular to PPG2, it is most consistently reported within this group.

Sub-category 4: Proximity

This refers to the physical proximity of the service to prospective service users. The significance of the visibility of the service as a result of its prominent location within the community has already been discussed in relation to the community’s knowledge of it. It is discussed here as a separate external ‘service-specific’ driver due to the consistency of PPG2 report as a reason for getting involved with the service:

‘...it’s in your local village, like, you don’t have to go too far...’ (DRA1p9).

This service covers three regions with Sure Start facilities in each. However not all programmes run in all facilities resulting in parents potentially having to travel to another centre, other than their local one, to access a programme in which they are interested. It is suggested that the need to travel may result in a failure to attend:

‘So it’s kinda hit or miss where you go and it’s alright, I don’t mind travelling, but for other people who may mind travelling, it can be a bit of an inconvenience...I know,

am, there's other people who wouldn't go out of Castlederg to go to the groups...'
(CRI2p9).

This potential issue may be as a result of difficulty accessing transport in order to travel to the required location. It may also be because parents are reluctant to move outside their local area to access services due to a perceived risk of feeling uncomfortable when around others that they don't know. Whilst none of the PPG2 parents interviewed identified this as a direct issue for them, comparison may be drawn between this (PPG2/CRI2's) theme and observations made by S1, from PPG1:

'...It [service provision] was in their own community...they didn't have to go out, even as far as X X Institute or regional college...they were amongst basically their peers, so they weren't going into a place where they would maybe feel...be made to feel stupid...because they know a lot of people that's there...' (S1p26).

Therefore it is suggested that, whilst proximity has been categorised here as an external driver, its power is derived from the internal need to stay close to familiar territory and peer group in addition to the external practical benefit of not having to use transport to travel a distance.

Sub-category 4: Proximity = Conclusion

PPG2 parents identified the proximity of service as a powerful 'service-specific' external driver. The original government vision for Sure Start was that it would be within 'pram-pushing distance' (Melhuish & Hall, 2007, p5). The evidence cited by PPG2 parents suggests that Rainbow Sure Start is fulfilling that recommendation.

Whilst the physical proximity of RSS has a clear and obvious practical external benefit for prospective parent users of not requiring transport to travel a distance, there also appears to be an additional internal benefit of reduced risk of having to move outside the local community and avoids any potential risk of associated discomfort. This pattern is shared with PPG1 reports of parental preference for staying in their own community.

Sub-category 5: Flexibility

The final 'service-specific' and external driver of parent interest in becoming involved with RSS, identified by PPG2 parents, is the flexible nature of some of its constituent programmes

and it's perceived benefit to those parents with restricted availability to attend services/programmes:

'...because it was a drop-in service as well, you weren't obliged to go every week or you weren't signing up to anything...' (CRI1p4).

PPG2 parents reporting this as a driver were noted to be those designated as 'Registered, Inactive' by the study's stratified sampling process. Therefore is suggested that this pattern of attendance reflects the restricted availability of working parents to attend RSS during working hours rather than a choice not to attend. It is further suggested that RSS's flexibility, in the form of drop-in programmes, does address some of the attendance issues for this subgroup of PPG2 parents. This driver was not identified by PPG1 parents.

Sub-category 5: Flexibility = Conclusion

The 'service-specific' external driver of 'flexibility' in 'becoming involved' in RSS is an effective service provision for those parents, especially working parents, who are unable to sign up to programmes which require fixed attendance. In this way, this service is clearly adhering to its original ethos as a provider of 'additional services according to local need' (Glass, 1999, p258).

Sub-category 6: Self-Motivation

Within PPG2 there appears to be less evidence of the power of internal drivers in shaping parent interest in RSS relative to the external drivers compared with PPG1. With PPG2 parents registering with RSS as a matter of course. It is suggested that this is as a result of the 'community level SS service knowledge', 'service access', 'free service', service 'proximity' and 'flexibility of service' resulting in an apparent reduced need to action internal drivers.

Analysis of PPG2 data indicates some evidence of the influence of internal drivers with the most the powerful being **Self-Motivation**. The theme shared across both PPG1 and PPG2 parents, and driving parental behaviour of self-motivation, was parental identification of own need

'...some of them [friends] have used it, some of them had no real need to use it...I think they're all aware...' (CRA2p2).

As with PPG1 parents, there is variation in the specific needs reported by PPG2 parents with some inter-group differences noted.

Like PPG1 parents, PPG2 parents most consistently reported the need for **socialisation opportunities for themselves and their children** with both short and long term impacts:

'...just getting your children playing and learning...' (NRI2p2); and:

'...me and her would still meet up for lunch and she would come to mine and I would go to hers so it was a nice way to meet new friends...' (NRA1p3).

PPG2 parents also reflected the following areas of need identified by PPG1 parents: **need for advice, support and reassurance** from both staff and parents and **the need for time to self**.

There are two areas of need identified in PPG1 reports which are not reflected by evidence from PPG2 parents: i) 'access to educational experiences for child in the EY stage' and ii) 'seeking additional support for child'.

PPG2 reports do identify a need not specifically defined by PPG1: **not being from the area**:

'Not being from here myself, what I found really helpful for meeting people was the Sure Start...' (NRA1p3).

Whilst there was some reporting of this by PPG1 parents, this was inconsistent and therefore was not coded separately from the initial code 'socialisation opportunities for both parent and child'. Its consistency of report by PPG2 parents ensured that it was separately coded for this cohort. Evidence of this as a met need was inconsistently reported:

'...I was chatting to a woman from Newtownstewart...and her daughter-in-law's...originally from Thailand...she went to that [Sure Start] once and she never went back because she tried talking to other parents...she was asking them questions about the kids and they weren't really interacting back with her...' (NRA1p3/4).

Whilst internal drivers for PPG2 have been shown to be less powerful in relation to the impact of the external drivers discussed above, there is evidence to indicate that the internal driver, 'Self-Motivation', can still influence parent behaviour, causing them not to attend a service/programme which they perceive as not meeting a need:

'...I'm a nurse and then I kinda know different things...so I didn't access it [First Aid and weaning classes] for that reason...' (DRI1p6); and:

‘...I was maybe a wee bit more confident with [C1]...I felt I was doing alright with the balance of what I had at home and what she [C1] did with mum at the groups...with [C2]...things were difficult at home and I felt more inclined to get out and about and to go to the groups then with him...’ (CRI1p5).

Sub-category 6: Self-motivation = Conclusion

There is some evidence of the power of the internal driver ‘Self-Motivation’ to promote initial parent interest in RSS. Similarities in the identified needs of parents underpinning this driver have been detected across the PPG1 and PPG2 groups. It has been shown to be a much less powerful driver for PPG2 participants than PPG1 participants. It is suggested that this is as a direct result of PPG2 parents registering with RSS as a matter of course, as a result of the visibility of the service, parental awareness of it and the advocacy for it across related services, compared to PPG1 parents who reported greater difficulty accessing particular EY services such as Sure Start.

Sub-category 7: Capacity for Self-Help

In conjunction with PPG2’s interest in RSS as a result of the ‘self-motivation’ driver, there is concomitant evidence of these PPG2 parents being driven by a ‘capacity for self-help’:

‘...I suppose maybe it’s my personality where I just like to go to these things and to be out there and to do these things...’ (CRA2p17).

Whilst both PPG1 and PPG2 parents describe behaviours of becoming involved in RSS which have been coded as ‘self-motivation’ and ‘capacity for self-help’, the relative proportion of reporting differs across these groups with PPG2 found to have a lower level of reporting than PPG1.

Sub-category 7: Capacity for Self-Help = Conclusion

Parent ‘capacity for self-help’ has been identified as an internal driver of parent initial interest in RSS. The power of this driver is much reduced for PPG2 in comparison to PPG1. It is suggested that this is as a result of a systemic lack of need for PPG2 parents to have to action self-help behaviours in order to access an EY service since accessibility to RSS has been shown to be non-problematic for PPG2 parents.

Sub-category 8: Professional Advice

There is only limited evidence of professionals providing overt advice to PPG2 parents to become involved in RSS. It is suggested that this is due to the pervasive nature of knowledge about and ease of access to RSS, as discussed above, resulting in a reduced need for healthcare professionals to make overt recommendations.

There is no evidence provided by PPG2 reports to substantiate or refute conclusions made based on PPG1 reports in respect of the power of professional advice and the suggested perception that any professional recommendation of a service acts as a guarantee of service access or provision.

Subcategory 8: Professional Advice = Conclusion

There is limited evidence to indicate the power of professional advice in shaping PPG2 parental interest in becoming involved in RSS. It is suggested that this is as a result of the lack of actual provision of advice by healthcare professionals to prospective RSS users since interest in the service appears to occur automatically, as standard practice, within this service location as the service is so well embedded within the community. This differs significantly from evidence provided by PPG1 where this was found to act as a powerful external driver.

5.3.2.2 Summary of Analysis of ‘Becoming Involved in Rainbow Sure Start (RSS)’

Having identified parent participation in EY services as a two stage process with the PPG1 group, ‘becoming involved’ and ‘staying involved’, it was hoped that these findings could be substantiated by PPG2 data. Based on analysis of PPG2 data it is possible to verify the first stage of this process of ‘becoming involved’.

There are qualitative differences in sub-categories identified under the umbrella term of ‘becoming involved’ between PPG1 and PPG2. Whilst six drivers were identified for PPG1, eight were identified for PPG2 with three of these, ‘free service’, ‘service proximity’ and ‘flexibility of service’, having no correlates with PPG1 data. These three sub-categories adhere to Sure Start service provision and delivery outlined in policy (Melhuish & Hall, 2007) and therefore are referred to, by this study, as ‘service-specific’ drivers.

There are four sub-categories which are shared across both groups (self-motivation, capacity for self-help, professional advice and service access) however there is variation in the

apparent proportionate power of these to shape parent behaviour across the two groups. Broadly, it appears that external drivers are much more powerful for PPG2 parents than internal drivers, whilst the opposite has been noted for PPG1 with internal drivers the most powerful.

The theme identified as exerting most influence on PPG2 parent behaviour is ‘community level Sure Start knowledge’. It is similar, but not the same as PPG1’s ‘Information Provision (community level)’ which refers specifically to the nature and availability of EY service information. PPG2’s ‘community level Sure Start knowledge’ aims to capture PPG2’s ready knowledge of Rainbow Sure Start as a result of the service visibility, peer experience of it and close links between it and paediatric healthcare services with a consequential lack of parental need to action self-motivation and self-help in order to obtain an EY service or professional advice to access it as opposed to the information gathering that PPG1 parents reported having to undertake. It is concluded that these findings do not contribute to those theories, based on PPG1 data, suggesting that parent patterns of becoming involved are divided into those self-motivated to become involved in a service and those who do so as a result of professional advice. Instead the theory should be revised to incorporate the component of EY service visibility in the community.

PPG2 parents did consistently identify a range of needs that they sought involvement with the service to address and these are discussed above under the heading of ‘Self-Motivation’. There was some variation between those identified by PPG1 parents and PPG2 parents. PPG2 parents did not identify a need for ‘access to educational experiences for child at the Early Years stage’ or ‘seeking additional support for child’.

It is concluded that there is a consistent lack of PPG2 parental interest in accessing educational support for their children through their involvement in RSS. The evidence provided here further specifies and strengthens this theme originally identified during PPG1 GT data analysis.

PPG2 parents did reflect the needs of PPG1 parents in relation to ‘socialisation opportunities for both parent and child’, ‘need for practical advice and support’ and ‘time for self’. They also identified a new need not reported by the PPG1 group: ‘not being from the area’.

Finally, there is no evidence of PPG1 driver 'Personal Experience' in PPG2 data. It is suggested that this is also as a direct result of 'community level Sure Start knowledge' outweighing other drivers in influencing parent involvement patterns.

5.3.3 Maintaining Involvement in Rainbow Sure Start

PPG1 data analysis has provided evidence to substantiate the findings of literature review for this study which suggests that parent participation is a two part process: becoming involved and maintaining involvement (Northrop et al, 2008).

This finding is verified by service-specific PPG2 reports and is coded under the umbrella term of 'maintaining involvement in Rainbow Sure Start'. These reports will now be considered in light of the challenges reported by PPG1 of maintaining involvement following 'becoming involved'. Consideration will also be given to these reports in light of RSS's aim of ensuring positive impact for child, parent and family. A summary of findings is presented in Table 5.5.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG2 data)
Maintaining involvement in RSS	Effective Communication	Face-to-face interaction	<i>'...even the likes of there being a midwife and a Health Visitor available...and discuss any issues that you have with the midwife...without going to your statutory [services]...they're under a lot of pressure themselves...'</i> (CRI2p15)
		Information Provision	<i>'...it [service information] does be on the newsletter and then I'm on Facebook and I'm friends with the Sure Start on Facebook...I think that they support one another...they need to know in advance how many people are coming to the classes or whatever which is why the newsletter's good because most people will ring when they get it whereas the FB page, it could be a couple of days before the class is due to start...they support each other...they're a good source of information for the both...'</i> (NRA1p10).
	Made to feel comfortable	Made to feel comfortable by RSS staff	<i>'...the staff are really friendly...they never judged you which made you want to come back again...'</i> (NRA1p6)
		Made to feel comfortable by other service users	<i>'...it was so relaxed and laid back and everyone just chatted and you had a wee cup of tea and watched the videos and stuff and it was great like...'</i> (CRA1p4) <i>'...I suppose it can be difficult within a group setting...you're worried about what other people will think about you but I never had that feeling here...'</i> (CRI2p6)
	Sense of Commonality		<i>'...you're [parent & Sure Start staff] all kinda on the same side...you're all kinda on the same wavelength kinda thing...'</i> (CRA1p11)
	Meeting Need	socialisation opportunities for parents	<i>'...just a different environment instead of being in the house or being at work...come along and have a chat...'</i> (DRA2p12)
		socialisation opportunities for children	<i>'...learning to interact a bit more and be round other children her own age...'</i> (NRA1p18)
		Need for advice, support and reassurance	<i>'...like a pool of knowledge and you're just...availing of it, I suppose, all the time...'</i> (DRA1p5)
		Time to self	<i>'...it helped me cos of the break, I didn't have her all day...'</i> (NRI2p3)
	Wider family involvement	Involvement of husbands	<i>'...he's been a couple of times...to the groups in the mornings...'</i> (DRA2p9) <i>'...I will go home, "Oh we done this today in Sure Start" and explain this...so he really likes it...'</i> (NRA1p19)
		Involvement of extended family	<i>'...my mum, who was looking after [C1], had somewhere to go on a regular basis...I think the support on an adult level...for my mum talking to other babysitting grannies...'</i> (CRI1p2)

Table 5.5: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Maintaining Involvement in Rainbow Sure Start'

5.3.3.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Maintaining Involvement in RSS'

Five sub-categories of 'maintaining involvement in RSS' emerged from PPG2 parent participant data. Once coded and categorised, these were re-categorised as 'internal' and 'external' drivers of 'maintaining involvement' based on Snell-Johns et al's ecological framework (2004) as described previously. This is indicated on Table 5.5 by the colour coding of the boxes for sub-categories: yellow for 'internal' drivers and green for 'external' drivers. Analysis will now be presented on a sub-category by sub-category basis.

Sub-category 1: Effective Communication

Like PPG1 parents, PPG2 parents cited this as a powerful driver in influencing their behaviour to stay involved in RSS. This driver refers to communication between Service Provider and Service User as in PPG1 reports.

PPG2 reports of this were initially grouped and coded as following: 'face-to-face interaction' and 'information provision'. These initial codes reflect the nature of communication as either bi-directional (face-to-face interaction) or uni-directional (information provision). Therefore, there is some evidence, within this service-specific setting, of information sharing between EY staff and parents rather than parents simply receiving information as reported by PPG1 parents:

'...you can just talk to [Health Visitor]...any questions that you have...' (DRA1p5).

'Information provision' involved the dissemination of information from Service Provider to Service User or potential Service User in a unidirectional way using a range of modalities:

'...they kept me informed, I was always on the mailing list...they would have put notifications in the local paper and they would have phoned you an odd time to let you know that a closing date was coming up for something you would had picked an application form for...' (CRI1p8).

The evidence suggests that effective communication is a successful driver of involvement maintenance as a result of the accessibility and availability of practical advice and service information and immediacy of response especially with 'face-to-face interaction'.

It is also suggested that there is a consistency of effective communication experienced across the range of PPG2 participants not described by PPG1 parents. However when experienced

by PPG1 parents, it was reported to underpin relationship development with staff over the duration of parent involvement in the service. This experience was echoed by PPG2 parents:

'...at the start...you're nervous and you're wondering what people's thinking of you or thinking of your child...the relationship with the staff...the more I was at the place...the more I got to know [the staff]...just developing on them relationships...'
(DRI2p14).

From PPG2 data, there is a lack of consistent evidence to verify the PPG1 theme that effective communication appears to be directly inform relationship development with staff. Therefore it is suggested that within the PPG2 group continued involvement is not so dependent on a perception of a building of '*a bit of rapport*' (S6p19) with Sure Start staff. A possible explanation of this is that as RSS is a community-based service where there appears to be a consistent pattern of broad peer/community involvement were they, as parents, are '*...all in exactly the same boat...*' (S1p27) and it is this which sustains involvement rather than specific relationships with EY staff.

Sub-category 1: Effective Communication = Conclusion

'Effective communication' acts as an external driver in maintaining parent involvement in RSS. Two forms of communication have been specified by PPG2 analysis: bidirectional 'face-to-face interaction' and unidirectional 'information provision'. There is also a clear preference for discussing issues with RSS staff rather than statutory healthcare staff.

It also appears that there is a consistency of effective communication experienced by PPG2 parents that was not described by PPG1. It is suggested that this is as a result of the single service context of RSS and an historical effort to establish and make visible the service, in a small rural community, to potential service users.

Whilst there is evidence of PPG2 parent-staff relationship development during involvement, it appears that maintaining parent involvement is not dependent on it. This differs from the findings from PPG1 data analysis. This may be explained as an effect of this single community-based service where there is ubiquitous peer parent involvement and individual parents are not dependent on the relationship with staff alone to facilitate their presence or level of comfort within the RSS setting.

Sub-category 2: Made to Feel Comfortable

Analysis of PPG2 data echoes and specifies PPG1 driver 'Made to Feel Comfortable'. This has been categorised as an internal driver of maintaining EY service involvement.

PPG2 parents reported being 'made to feel comfortable' as a driver of ongoing attendance that was facilitated by both Sure Start staff and other Service Users.

Some PPG2 reports indicate that their sense of comfort was related directly to the continuity of staff involvement across the duration of their attendance:

'...every week I was still seeing the same face...' (DRA1p4).

Like PPG1 parents, PPG2 parental report indicates that it is a sense of not feeling judged which directly contributes to their feeling comfortable:

'...I mean you want to be able to feel comfortable...you need the support there to get the confidence...for not to be judged...I know [Sure Start Health Visitor] is a big advocate of...never wants to see you judged or the use of language that you are made feel like you're a bad mother...' (NRA1p7).

This evidence is reinforced by one PPG2 parent's report of feeling judged and the impact of that on her:

'...there was only one time I was ever made feel like that, it was a Baby Start class and it was a...new midwife...we had been to a hypno-birthing reunion...talk about our experiences...and I had said about how I had had an epidural and [midwife] said "well, did you do the hypno-birthing?" and I said "Yeah", she was "well clearly it didn't [work] then if you needed an epidural"...it did annoy me...' (NRA1p7).

Like PPG1, there is evidence to suggest that when made to feel uncomfortable, PPG2 parents will respond by choosing to terminate their involvement in a service:

'...she [acquaintance] went to that once and she never went back because she tried talking to other parents...she was asking them questions about their kids and they weren't really interacting back with her...' (NRA1p4).

It should be noted that there is only a single instance of this type of experience and impact found in PPG2 data and therefore it does not reflect the consistency of report of this issue provided by PPG1.

Sub-category 2: Made to Feel Comfortable = Conclusion

PPG2 data reinforces the theme of ‘being made to feel comfortable’, identified by PPG1 parents, as a powerful internal driver of ongoing involvement in EY services. The data indicates that there are two purveyors of this driver: RSS staff and other parents.

The reported outcome of this driver is that parents do not feel judged and, as a result, are more likely to continue their involvement with the service. The evidence clearly shows that when feeling uncomfortable or judged, parents will disengage from the programme. This pattern of involvement reflects that reported for PPG1.

It is also proposed that this internal driver is directly influenced by PPG2 Driver 1 ‘Effective Communication’:

‘...you can just talk to [Health Visitor]...any questions that you would have for a health visitor...you can discuss like if you had any worries...’ (DRA1p5).

Sub-category 3: Sense of Commonality

Analysis of PPG2 data echoes and specifies PPG1 driver ‘Sense of Commonality’. As with PPG1 data, it is categorised as an internal driver. Whilst this driver was identified by PPG1 parents in specific relation to other Service Users, PPG2 parents made reference to it in relation to both Sure Start staff and other Service Users:

‘...it’s all easygoing and very friendly and warm...everybody’s kinda the same...’ (CRA2p6).

A sense of commonality was reported by PPG2 parents to be important because it appears to reduce any sense of isolation referenced by both PPG1 and PPG2 parents upon becoming parents:

‘...it’s nice to hear other people’s experiences as well...it’s nice to hear that there are other people that are in the same boat...that it’s not just you or it’s not just your baby...’ (CRA1p7).

The evidence suggests that, in spite of a single report by one PPG2 parent, a sense of being made to feel comfortable and a sense of commonality in relation to both Sure Start staff and other Service Users is consistently experienced across this group. This consistency does contrast with experiences by PPG1.

Sub-category 3: Sense of Commonality = Conclusion

The internal driver of a 'sense of commonality' was first identified by PPG1 as influencing ongoing involvement of parents in EY services. Data from PPG2 has further specified this theme due to the consistency of its reporting. This data indicates PPG2 parents' sense of commonality was influenced by response from both EY staff and other service users to them. This differs from PPG1 parents who identified only other parents as purveyors of this driver. Reflecting findings of PPG1, there is clear evidence from PPG2 that parents will disengage from any service in which they feel that they have no sense of commonality with other parents or EY staff.

There is some evidence that any sense of being different from others is perceived negatively by parents. Therefore it is suggested that, as a result of this concern, there is a risk that those who do feel or are made to feel different are at risk of exclusion from EY services.

Sub-category 4: Meeting Need

The external driver 'Meeting Need' was identified originally in PPG1 reports. It was categorised separately because of the identification, from PPG1 reports, of a perceived relationship between parentally identified need and service provision to meet that need as a means of maintaining parent involvement in an EY service. This relationship was reflected and specified in PPG2 reports. Data was gathered from PPG2 reports to indicate parental perception of met need for each need coded under the sub-category code of 'self-motivation' which was identified as a driver of initial parental involvement in the previous stage of 'getting involved' in RSS: socialisation opportunities for parents and for children, need for advice, support and reassurance and time for self (see Table 5.5).

The additional need identified by PPG2, 'not being from the area', appears to have had varying outcomes. This is clearly demonstrated by one PPG2 parent who described this need as specific to her and reported it as an unmet need for her acquaintance but as a met need for her through her involvement with Sure Start:

'...well to be honest, not being from here myself, what I found really helpful for meeting people was the Sure Start...' (NRA1p3).

There is also evidence to indicate that parents will not attend services that they perceive not to meet a need:

'...I didn't go to those [weaning classes] because...[C1] was really easily weaned...she had no problems at all going on to solid food...but if there had of been any issues I would have definitely loved to have went...' (DRA1p6); and:

'...I did [attend]...but I have to say I haven't been since because I found the library too small as a venue for what was going on, [C2] is now two and a half but he's quite tall and loves running about and playing and there wasn't the same facility for doing that in the library setting...and a lot of smaller babies and children and...I just thought he was very restricted by the size of the scope there, the provision there...' (CRI1p20).

Sub-category 4: Meeting Need = Conclusion

'Meeting Need', with service provision addressing identified need, is a powerful external driver for maintaining parent involvement in RSS: *'...I got what I expected...'* (DRA2p11). In relation to specific PPG2 parentally reported identified need, discussed in section 5.3.2.1 under the sub-category heading 'Self-Motivation', there is evidence of the need for 'socialisation opportunities for parent and child', 'advice, support and reassurance from staff and peers' and 'time to self' being met consistently across the PPG2 group. The need 'not being from the area' has a mixed outcome, based on limited evidence available.

Overall PPG2 parents more consistently report having their identified needs met by RSS than PPG1. Therefore it is suggested that, for PPG2 parents registered with Rainbow Sure Start, there is no gap between individual parent need and service provision in the form of service information, advice, training and programme support and provision.

There is evidence of parents, based on limited data, choosing to disengage from RSS when they feel that it is not meeting a need. This behaviour reflects that reported for PPG1.

Sub-category 5: Wider Family Involvement

In addition to the drivers identified by PPG1 data and supported by PPG2 data, PPG2 reported an additional driver in maintaining parent involvement in RSS which has been labelled 'Wider Family Involvement'. This label incorporates two sets of data initially coded as 'involvement of husbands' and 'involvement of the extended family'.

Whilst there were consistent reports from PPG2 recruits, all of whom were mothers, of the 'involvement of husbands', the nature of that involvement appears to have been highly

variable. PPG2 data also suggests that extended family involvement was not consistently experienced throughout the PPG2 group:

'...they do say that...grannies can come...whether or not it would be a thing that...would happen with [C1] and his grannies, I don't think so...' (CRA2p14).

Whilst this pattern of extended family involvement is specific to this PPG2 group and the Sure Start service that they are attending, it should be noted that there is not wholesale engagement at the extended family level by PPG2 parents.

Sub-category 5: Wider Family Involvement = Conclusion

This is a new driver identified within the context of PPG2 parents attending RSS therefore it is categorised as 'service-specific'. There is inconsistent evidence of PPG2 parents maintaining their involvement in RSS as a result of both the direct and indirect involvement of spouses and extended family members e.g. grandparents.

5.3.3.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Maintaining Involvement in Rainbow Sure Start'

PPG2 reports of their ongoing involvement in RSS were analysed in order to identify drivers maintaining this involvement. Five drivers were identified, four of which reflect those identified for PPG1 and therefore the same labels were assigned: internal drivers 'Made to Feel Comfortable' and 'Sense of Commonality'; and external drivers 'Effective Communication' and 'Meeting Need'. An additional fifth driver, 'Wider Family Involvement' was also identified by PPG2 parents and therefore has been designated as 'service-specific'. Based on the evidence provided, there appears to be little difference in the relative impact of each driver on ongoing parent involvement.

For PPG2 parents, 'Effective Communication' was defined as occurring in two modalities: bidirectional 'face-to-face communication' and unidirectional 'information provision' with the accessibility of RSS staff reported to be more convenient than statutory staff. This finding parallels that of PPG1.

Whilst 'effective communication' was identified as a key driver for these PPG2 parents, the manner of how it impacts on their involvement behaviour differs from that of PPG1. For PPG1 there is a clear dependence on 'effective communication' as a means of relationship building with EY staff which acts to underpin their involvement in their respective EY

service. For PPG2 parents, all accessing RSS, the visibility, received knowledge and accessibility of the service ensure high engagement by parents with a concomitant effect of limited dependence of parents on their relationship with EY staff.

Like PPG1, PPG2 internal drivers ‘made to feel comfortable’ and ‘sense of commonality’ were found to be inter-dependent in driving parents to maintain their involvement in RSS. There is evidence of parental non-attendance when parents do not feel comfortable or do not experience a sense of commonality. This reflects findings for PPG1. Different from PPG1, is the PPG2 finding that a ‘sense of commonality’ is sought with both RSS staff as well as other parents.

In relation to the external driver ‘Meeting Need’, there is consistent evidence to suggest that parents will remain involved in a programme or service which they consider to be meeting a need. There is also consistent evidence of identified needs being met for three of those reported for PPG2: socialisation opportunities, need for advice, support and reassurance from staff and parents and time to self. There is inconsistent and slight evidence for the PPG2 service-specific need of ‘not being from the area’. It is suggested that this need, alongside evidence of the parental need for ‘feeling comfortable’ and having a ‘sense of commonality’ with both peers and RSS staff, has the potential to risk the exclusion of those parents who are perceived as not fitting in.

This pattern of consistently reported met need, apart from ‘not being from the area’, for PPG2 differs from PPG1 reports which provided a mixed profile of met and unmet need. ‘Wider Family Involvement’ is a newly differentiated ‘service-specific’ driver for maintaining parent involvement in RSS. This driver refers to the involvement of both husbands and extended family members, e.g. grandparents, both directly and indirectly. PPG2 evidence of this driver is inconsistent across constituent group members.

It is concluded that parent involvement in an EY service is a two stage process. The first stage, ‘becoming involved’, is driven by parental perception of need with personal experience and professional advice also exerting influence on parental behaviour. In a small community, visibility of the service directly impacts the amount that a parent has to do to access that service and, as a consequence of knowledge about and experience of it by the community, may even override perception of need in becoming involved.

'Maintaining involvement' occurs as a direct result of a parental sense of ease within the setting and a perception of having their need met even where a service is visible, accessible and highly popular amongst peers.

5.3.4 Risk of Non-involvement

Analysis of PPG2 data indicates that whilst RSS is consistently described as a useful resource with professional staff, discussion in the previous sections of this chapter indicate that ongoing involvement does not consistently occur. This is reflected by the RSS service attendance records. Analysis of PPG2 report has lead to the identification of a number of barriers to more consistent engagement. These are summarised in Table 5.6:

Emergent Core Category	Sub-categories	Parent Views (samples from PPG2 data)
Risk of non-involvement	Being a Working Mum	<i>'...but we don't have the time to get to any of them, I know that sounds bad...we try to make the time but I work fulltime, my partner works fulltime, it's nearly impossible unless I'm off a Tuesday morning and then we'll go...and then sometimes I've either been up doing an assignment for college so I've either, I like me sleep instead of coming here ...'</i> (DRA2p8)
	Lack of age appropriate programmes	<i>'...they're not all just suitable for...the age of your child at that time maybe...'</i> (DRI1 p2)
	Accommodating more than one preschool child	<i>'...my friend had an older girl, they [Baby Start] didn't accommodate older girls...'</i> (NRA1p6).
	Programme Booking	<i>'...it's just trying to get yourself booked in...'</i> (DRI1 p2)
	Postcode dependent service access	
	Private Sector Wraparound Childcare provision	<i>'...there's a big influx of private childcare at the minute...what they probably do is a lot of the afterschool provision that parents are willing to maybe pay that bit extra for...with commercial providers it's a smoother transition...to incorporate older children into that childcare...which is less the case...with Sure Start...'</i> (CRI1p26)

Table 5.6: Summary of Emergent Core Category and Sub-categories for 'Risk of Non-involvement'

5.3.4.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Risk of Non-involvement'

The PPG2 reports analysed and coded for this study were from mothers. Six of them describe themselves as either on maternity leave or as 'stay-at-home' mums and four are working mums. These experiences appear to have directly shaped their perceptions of RSS and its provision.

Sub-category 1: Being a Working Mum

This was identified as the most commonly occurring barrier to ongoing involvement in Rainbow Sure Start:

'...when I'm back at work I find that I'm not able to make it as much...' (DRI1 p2).

Maternity leave involvement with Sure Start also presents issues for parents upon their return to work, in addition to access issues:

'...for parents...we feel guilty...that we're out working...that we are not doing the right thing...' (CRI1p15).

Whilst some parents reported that they hoped to *'...still attend the breastfeeding if I can...and if there's other things are on on my days off...'* (NRA1p4), many highlighted that even attending Sure Start now and again would be logistically difficult due to the nature of the work they do:

'it's shift work' (DRI1p1);

and the variability of a work schedule of that nature:

'...you never know from one week to the next sometimes what you are working...' (DRI1p1).

There is also some evidence of PPG2 parents feeling that they are disadvantaged in relation to service access as a result of being a working parent:

'...Two Year Old Programme...single parents gets priorities and I don't know do...foreign nationals get priority?...single parents get priority for groups like that....so working parents...don't always get into those groups because they're so limited...they are at a disadvantage that way...' (DRI1 p10).

This theme was also reported by some PPG1 parents:

'I felt very discriminated against because I am a working mother...I was brand new to being a mummy and there was no book came along with this little child...' (S1p2).

Sub-category 2: Lack of age appropriate services for children

Whilst this was identified in the PPG2 data as a potential risk of non-involvement by PPG2 parents it was not consistently reported. Some PPG2 parents have suggested that *'...there was a lot to do but there's more now as she's older...'* (DRI2p3) whilst others report that *'...there is a lot for when they're wee babies and then when they get up a bit there's very little...'* (NRA1p21).

Sub-category 3: Accommodating more than one preschool child

PPG2 reports indicate a clear block to attending services if the programme which you wish to attend can only accommodate the child at a specified age:

'...some of the times you had groups...where you couldn't take the other child...the biggest stumbling block throughout the year just having one child...close to the other...' (DRI1p5).

Sub-category 4: Programme Booking

This is a particular risk for PPG2 parents with irregular work schedules:

'...most of the things require a booking process...with working you don't know if you are going to be able to make all those days...you don't want to be taking up space that you might only get one out of four...' (DRI1 p2).

This particular PPG2 parent reported that the solution for her was to attend *'...the meeting type of ones that we kinda went to because you could kinda drop in to them...'* (DRI1 p11).

This further substantiates the evidence of 'flexibility of service' as a driver of initial parent interest in RSS, as discussed above, and provides some evidence to suggest that it may be a driver of ongoing parent involvement in RSS.

Sub-category 5: Postcode dependent service access

This risk has been discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to 'becoming involved' in RSS (Section 5.3.2.1). It also emerged from the PPG2 data in relation to 'maintaining involvement' in RSS with some PPG2 parents reporting that they had to stop accessing programmes when this criterion was introduced after their registration with Sure Start:

'...the one difficulty I found...was the catchment area we live in...[C2] has been voted out of...because of the new criteria that's been in place this year...he loved going to

the crèche on [location 1]...but the address was wrong for that and then the [location 2] one, he didn't like... ' (CRI1p6/7).

For this PPG2 parent, the resultant cessation of programme access resulted in frustration and negative ideation about the programme:

'...I find it personally a shame that maybe there's obviously plenty of spaces at the Stay'n'Play...but because [C2] lives up the countryside a bit, he can't officially stay... ' (CRIp22).

Sub-category 6: Private Sector Wraparound Childcare Provision

This was identified by one PPG2 parent. It is suggested that, for those parents struggling to access a service which can accommodate children of varying ages, as discussed above, this could be the answer. The potential impact of this for the local Sure Start service is that it reduces the number of potential parent and family recruits as a result of the offer of 'wraparound' provision by EY services in the private sector.

5.3.4.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Risk of Non-involvement'

Six risks of parent non-involvement in RSS have been identified from PPG2 data: being a working mum; lack of age appropriate services for children; accommodating more than one preschool child; programme booking; postcode dependent service access; and private sector wraparound childcare provision.

For working mothers with more than one child, there is evidence that Sure Start is not able to meet their needs in order to accommodate their attendance. It is suggested that for stay-at-home mums with one child, Rainbow Sure Start is able to offer a service in a manner which will ensure maintained involvement. For parents with more than one child and who have to return to work, maintaining involvement becomes more challenging. This fits closely with PPG1 evidence which has led to the conclusion that as long as the needs of an individual parent do not exceed the parameters of pre-planned Early Years service provision, service involvement will be maintained.

It is not possible to make a comparison of risks to maintaining parent involvement identified in PPG2 analysis with that of PPG1. This is as a direct result of the risks identified in PPG1 data not being coded as 'risks'. This decision was based on the diverse and complex nature of

the range of EY service provision being accessed by PPG1 parents and the potential complexity in identifying contributing risk factors. Those identified for PPG1 were coded as 'unmet need' and discussed in those terms. For PPG2 data, 'risks' were coded in this way due to their ease of identification as causative in this 'service-specific' context.

5.3.5 Impact of RSS Involvement

Based on PPG1 reports, the emergent core category 'perception of impact of EY services' was defined. PPG1 reports indicate parental perception of having their needs met and exceeded, as indicated by the assignment of the sub-category 'additional benefit'. However there was also PPG1-derived evidence of 'unmet need' when parental need exceeded the parameters of pre-determined EY service provision. This theme of parental perception of impact was used with PPG2 to determine attitudes of parents accessing the same single EY service.

Table 5.7 presents a summary of findings.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG2 data)
Impact of Rainbow Sure Start (RSS) Involvement	Met Need		<i>'...it's been good for all of us, the dynamics of the household has been brilliant...everybody's happy, everybody's cheery, everybody's in good form...' (CRI2p11)</i>
	Additional Benefit	Child development	<i>'...I didn't realise it [attending the Two Year Old Programme] would have such an impact on her development...there's things when she comes home, how did she do... and she would say wee things and I'd be like "Oh dear"...ABCs and I would have thought about [age] 3 or 4...' (NRI2p2)</i>
		Child enjoyment	<i>'...I know when she was tiny that maybe she didn't really register where she was or what was going on but she always seemed to enjoy it...' (DRA1p21)</i>
		Development of self-confidence	<i>'...gaining her self-confidence...the visits to Jo Jingles...she did very little interaction at the beginning and by the end of the year...she was up singing and dancing and pre-empting what was coming next...' (CRI1p15).</i>
		Improving independence	<i>'...she's so attached to her mother...but with the girls down there [Sure Start staff], they've managed to do that for me perfectly fine...' (DRI2p5)</i>
		Increased self-confidence	<i>'...when you get out and meet other ones it kinda brings you out of yourself...' (CRA1p4)</i>
		Extended family involvement	<i>'...the social aspect of it was probably was key for her [granny] because we lost my dad ten years ago...so having [C1] to look after was very much a focus for her and a positive thing in her life...her and [C1] are very well bonded because from the beginning they were involved in going to the services [Sure Start] and doing things together...mum would have been very protective of that time she had with [C1]...' (CRI1p9).</i>
		Change of perspective	<i>'...the biggest impact would have been a shift in my thinking away from the right way of doing things...making sure that as a parent you do absolutely everything right and do everything the best that you can for a child, the best that you can certainly, but allowing them to make their own mistakes...that you are only human and that you're doing a good job, whatever you do, it's been a reassuring experience...' (CRI1p13).</i>

Table 5.7: Summary of Emergent Core Categories of 'Impact of RSS Involvement' (PPG2)

5.3.5.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Impact of Rainbow Sure Start Involvement'

The sub-categories identified and coded under the label 'Impact of Rainbow Sure Start' are presented below:

Sub-category 1: Met Need

PPG2 parents provided reports of general perceptions of positive impact:

'...I would have been happier because...you got out that day...and she'd sense that as well..' (DRA1p22).

Taking this and the discussion in Section 5.3.3.1 of the sub-category 'Meeting Need' into account, there is consistent report of PPG2 parents perceiving RSS provision as meeting their identified needs. There is consistent report of PPG2 parent perception of ongoing involvement as having a positive impact on them and their children. There is also evidence that this perception of positive impact causes individual parents to maintain current involvement or to seek to become involved with the service with another child:

'...I hope that this wee girl [C2] gets as much benefit out of it as my eldest girl...' (DRI2p15).

These findings raise the question of the relationship between parent perception of involvement and recorded service attendance.

PPG2 parents were recruited to this group based on their apparent attendance patterns according to RSS records. A sampling criteria was devised for application to parents' patterns of RSS attendance in order to recruit equal numbers of parents with active and inactive patterns of attendance. The purpose of this was to optimise the opportunity to gather a range of parent experiences of different types of involvement. There is consistent PPG2 parent report of parental perception of impact as likely to influence their ongoing or repeated involvement in RSS. This was reported consistently across PPG2 parents regardless of their active/inactive label. Therefore it was concluded that there is a mismatch between parental report and service attendance records.

Further consideration was given to service attendance records of the PPG2 interviews analysed. Parental report indicated that those PPG2 parents (all female) were registered with and regularly attended RSS during their maternity leave. Upon their return to work, their individual attendance dropped as a result of the gap between (variable) work schedules and

RSS programme schedules. This gap was previously discussed in Section 5.3.4 'Risks of Non-involvement'. It was established that with the application of the sampling criteria discussed above, there is the risk that the 18 month cut-off point used provided too narrow a timeframe in which to capture actual parent attendance activity prior to their return to work. Therefore it is concluded that, with the application of this sampling criteria, there is a risk of mislabelling PPG2 parent activity patterns. This needs to be given full consideration in any further work.

Sub-category 2: Additional Benefit

As well as PPG2 parental report of met need as a result of RSS provision, as previously discussed, there is also evidence of additional benefit. PPG2 reports of this have been coded according to whether they relate to the child or parent. This differentiation is recorded on Table 5.7 based on colour coding: 'child'-specific data is coloured brown and 'adult'-specific data is coloured blue.

PPG2 'adult' specific data also made reference to some further impacts of this 'additional benefit', these included involvement as a means of reducing risk of low mood, providing extended family members with resources to use with other children in addition to the child attending the service and the psychological impact for parent of having a grandparent attend an EY service with their child whilst they return to work:

'...I knew that both of them were happy with it [attending Sure Start] which meant that I was very content to go out to work and that made a very big difference to me...'
(CRI1p10).

5.3.5.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Impact of RSS Involvement'

Unlike PPG1, there is no evidence of unmet need reported by PPG2 parents. The result of this is that PPG2 parents consistently perceive the impact of involvement in RSS as positive with a preference for maintaining that involvement. This is in spite of the finding that 'risk of non-involvement' does exist. This has been discussed in Section 5.3.4.

It is suggested that the range of additional benefits reported by PPG2 parents contributes to the consistently reported parental perception of positive impact of involvement. The range of PPG2-identified additional benefits have been initially coded and are summarised in Table 5.7. These closely echo those identified for PPG1 and therefore substantiate those findings.

The consistently positive PPG2 reports of perceived impact of involvement in Rainbow Sure Start appears to be as a result of the service's ongoing ability to meet parent-identified need, its historical legacy of such performance in this rural community and the consistency of use by parents with the associated implications of that (e.g. perceptions of service shared amongst peer parent social groups). It should also be pointed out that, within this community, there are very few alternative EY services which will also impact on this finding.

5.3.6 Parent Role in Rainbow Sure Start

Review of the literature and policy highlighted a focus on the role of parent in the EY context (DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b). PPG1 data analysis coded four key roles based on parent report. These findings informed the themes of 'nature of parent involvement' and 'parent role' used with PPG2 parents in order to generate data from a 'service-specific' context which could be compared with PPG1 findings. PPG2 findings are summarised in Table 5.8.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples for PPG2 data)
Parent Role	Facilitator		<i>'...you're really there as the parent of the child so you're really there to go and, I suppose, just to help them socialise a bit and to get about...to learn things to make sure that you as a parent are able to go and...help with the bonding...and help with his development...'</i> (CRI2p2)
	Skills Acquisitioner		<i>'... it's just to learn different ways of...caring for children...it gives you a different way of interacting with him...'</i> (CRI2p3)
	Co-ordinator		
	Educator		<i>'...I think that you are always learning them wee things, even if it's just learning them to clap their hand...from that young age, you do be teaching them everything...'</i> (CRA1p10) <i>'...showing her things...well I've done that from the start anyway...'</i> (NRI2p7)

Table 5.8: Summary of the Emergent Core Categories of 'Parent Roles in RSS' (PPG2)

5.3.6.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Parent Role in Rainbow Sure Start'

PPG2 parent perceptions of their roles within Rainbow Sure Start most commonly align with that of the '**Facilitator**' role identified with PPG1. These parents appear to view their own

involvement as fundamental, along with that of their child, as a means to ensuring maximum benefit for the child.

With the definition and labelling of the 'Facilitator' role using PPG1 data, examples of activities undertaken as part of this role were also described. It has not been possible to further define these roles using PPG2 data due to a lack of activity examples from PPG2 data, apart from a single report:

'...I was probably more focussed on him, me playing with him more, you know, because that's the time you had for play...focussed more on play and interaction ...'
(DRA2p6).

Evidence of the '**Skill Acquisition**' role was also identified from PPG2 data. This data also reinforces the theory, derived from PPG1 data, that parent involvement is a component of this role. PPG2 data also echoes PPG1-based theory that the 'Skills Acquisition' role requires more active involvement by the parent than the 'Facilitator' role as parents seek to acquire new skills to use with their child in order to provide maximum benefit of involvement in EY services for them.

Evidence of the '**Co-ordinator**' role from PPG2 data is limited to those who had children attending the Two Year Old Programme at the time of interview. Often these parents had been actively involved with Rainbow Sure Start in either the Facilitator or Skill Acquisition role when the child attended programmes as a younger child.

Cross-over from one role to another as a result of a change in the nature of the service that the child is accessing is the only example provided by PPG2 data of the 'changing between roles' described for PPG1 parents. PPG2 reports do not reflect those categorised as 'moving between roles' for PPG1.

In spite of a powerful policy focus on the theoretical concept of '**Parent as Educator**', PPG1 data failed to reflect this in relation to parent perceptions of their role in the EY context. It was, therefore, very important to examine this in a single EY setting with a clear and traceable mandate to promote this: Sure Start.

PPG2 data indicates that, like PPG1 data, parents showed support for the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator': *'...I think it's a good idea...'* (DRA1p24). Unlike PPG1 parents, some PPG2 parents reported that this is something which they feel they are doing and have been doing for some time since *'...[education starts] from the very start...'* (DRI1 p9). As a result of these PPG2 reports it is suggested that parental perception of their role in their child's education is that they are doing this anyway with services like RSS there simply to support and focus that input:

'...it's something that's always been there in the background...you're educators from the moment that you have a child and what it [attending Sure Start] probably does do is focus parents maybe on the everyday things that they're doing and how it impacts on their child and the children's learning...raising awareness amongst parents...' (CRI1p14).

PPG2 reports add further specification to parental perception about their role in the life of their child as they report being primary caregiver for their child with supporting their education part of that role:

'...it's not up to the government to raise your kids, it's up to you...all them services help to make it easier for you to make it...' (NRA1p13);

and:

I'm educating her everyday...but you don't think if it as educating her...' (DRA1p24).

PPG2 reports also suggest that, as well as supporting them to develop their knowledge of age-appropriate skills and activities for use with their child, Sure Start acts to support the parent to develop their philosophy of parenting:

'...it makes you think about how you would want to be as a parent...what do you want to get out of your child and their upbringing...' (NRA1p16).

Therefore it is concluded that for these PPG2 parents, there is a strong and consistent perception of themselves as educators with services such as Sure Start there to support them in this role rather than EY services as educators.

However there are some exceptions, with some PPG2 parents expressing concerns about their ability as an educator: *'... "Oh my goodness can I? What if I make a mess of it?" ...'* (DRA1p24). Another PPG2 parent reports that *'...there's a lot of responsibility on parents to*

make sure that children do learn to read...and to help them with everything like that...’ (CRI2p13). This sense of additional responsibility reflects one of the concerns voiced by PPG1 parents about taking on this role. PPG1 parents also reported concerns about the additional constraints that taking on such a role would place on them along with concerns about the skill set required to carry out this role effectively. These themes were not detected in PPG2 data:

‘...I was here to learn, for me and for the child...it wasn’t as an educator at all, it was as a trainee, I was just getting to know the services...just getting to know everything...learning from here and then going home and furthering it there...’ (DRI1 p9).

5.3.6.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Parent Role in Rainbow Sure Start'

PPG2 parents consistently have a positive perception of the need for them to be involved in RSS for the benefit of their children and therefore the roles most commonly identified as being undertaken by them are either as a Facilitator or a Skill Acquisitioner.

There is some evidence of PPG2 parents acting as Co-ordinators however the evidence suggests that their assumption of that role appears to be dictated by the external driver of the of service type that their child is accessing directly dictating parent role, e.g. TYOP where there is no parent attendance, rather than as the result of any internally driven choice to shift role depending on need as identified for PPG1 cohort.

PPG2 evidence relating to parent roles within RSS draws parallels with PPG1 data but does not contribute a large body of evidence to substantiate PPG1 findings particularly in relation to the Co-ordinator role.

Also unlike PPG1, there is consistent evidence of PPG2 parents perceiving themselves as educators without necessarily ascribing that label to themselves. They also describe themselves as educating their child from the outset with Sure Start there to support them rather than to adopt the primary educator role directly. These findings do not substantiate the suggestion that PPG1 parents do not consistently recognise a role for themselves as educators because they do not operate within a cultural or societal construct which promotes such a role. Based on the data gathered from PPG2 cohort that such a culture is promoted within RSS at the exosystem level (Snell-Johns et al, 2004).

5.3.7 Nature of Parent Participation in Rainbow Sure Start

With 'parent participation' a clear policy focus for EY settings, as outlined in Chapter 2, this was a core theme for interview with PPG1 parents. Data generated by PPG1 cohort indicates a consistent pattern of PPG1 parents not engaging in active participation when these reports were mapped across to Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* (1969). It was important to consider these findings within a 'service-specific' setting which has a clear policy focus on 'active participation'. A summary of findings is presented in Table 5.9.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Parent Views (samples from PPG1 data)
Nature of Parent Participation in Rainbow Sure Start	Partnership working	<i>'...during the classes...if there was ever anything...nobody would be afraid to say...'</i> (DRA1p15)
	Non- or tokenistic participation	<i>'...there was one [feedback form] after every class ended...a wee survey at the end where you could give...your suggestions...'</i> (DRA1p19) <i>'...recently we went to...a Parent Forum for Sure Start...what we thought of the services...I took that as an opportunity to go and tell them that this was great for me and it was fantastic...'</i> (DRI2p7/8)
	Feedback as a means to express views	<i>'...in the nurturing [class]...people were asking "well, why do yous not do this?" or "why do yous not do that?"...'</i> (NRA1p10) <i>'...there was plenty of opportunity for [feedback]...the leaders are...very easy to talk to...they're very open to suggestions...'</i> (DRI1p8)
	Giving something back	<i>'...I took it as an opportunity to go and tell them that this was great for me and it was fantastic...'</i> (DRI2p8)
	Feedback as complaining	<i>'I suppose I would be a wee bit like "I hope they don't think that I'm, like, trying to tell them [what to do]"...'</i> (DRA1p17) <i>'...I never brought it up...I'd keep everything to myself, I'm not really one to go and complain about anything...'</i> (DRA2p7)
	Not confident enough to provide feedback	<i>'...I don't know if I would be confident enough...I'm not very good at that kind of thing...'</i> (DRI1p6/7)

Table 5.9: Summary of the Emergent Core Categories for 'Nature of Parent Participation in RSS' (PPG2)

5.3.7.1 Analysis of 'Nature of Parent Participation in Rainbow Sure Start'

In considering PPG2 findings, it should be remembered that account has not been taken of the labels of 'active' or 'inactive' assigned during the sampling procedure due to identified risk of mislabelling PPG2 parent activity patterns as discussed in Section 5.3.5.1.

There is clear evidence of a perception of more balanced relationship between Sure Start staff and PPG2 parents than that identified for PPG1:

'...it was probably something that they very deliberately made sure that they did was not to make you feel as if they were the parent, they were the parent substitute, they were the expert and you were coming in, they were very much doing it in partnership with you...they were providing a service, not that they were taking over in any way...' (CRI1p11).

This evidence suggests that PPG2 parents perceived their relationship with Sure Start staff as a partnership in which each partner was able to make an equal contribution. This contrasts with the experiences of PPG1 where there was a pattern of adopting a 'deficit' model approach by service providers.

Whilst this perception of working in partnership with EY staff is consistently reported by PPG2 parents, analysis of reports indicates that participation was tokenistic in the form of 'consultation' activities: completion of feedback forms and surveys and taking part in Parent Forums. These reports were inconsistent with a degree of variation of awareness of or participation in the Parent Forum consultation events:

'...[Sure Start staff said] "you need to come to our Parent Forum and tell us what you want us to do"...then some people were like "Oh, we didn't know you had one"...' (NRA1p10);

'...but when I got the text message [about the parent forum meeting] I wasn't like "Oh I need to go...say what I think or whatever..." (CRA1p9); and:

'...they do a Parenting Forum...I have never been to it and the reason being the times have always been really bad for me...' (NRA1p9).

PPG2 parents do appear to have been facilitated to provide retrospective feedback to Sure Start service providers in a consistent and ongoing basis. There does not appear to be

evidence of opportunity to do so at a level beyond that of consultation as a means to influence or shape Sure Start services at a strategic level:

'...the greater part of my experience was as a receiver of the services...there were always opportunities for feedback on feedback forms and the staff always received your comments and feedback...during the year...verbally, just anecdotally...in terms of designing a course or shaping a course or content...it was probably less asked for, I wouldn't have noticed that it was as much asked for...probably less experience of being asked what would you like to see Sure Start providing...' (CRI1p17).

PPG2 reports indicate that parents do perceive these 'consultation' activities as a positive opportunity to express views and provide suggestions, with EY staff perceived as interested in receiving and actioning this information. However this attitude is not consistent across the PPG2 group. Whilst some view feedback as an opportunity to give something back, other PPG2 parents had concerns that their feedback would be perceived as complaining and still others reported feeling that they weren't confident enough to provide feedback.

5.3.7.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Nature of Parent Participation in RSS'

In conclusion, PPG2 parents appear to view the relationship that they have with Sure Start staff as balanced and equitable. They also appear to have been facilitated with a regular, robust, structured feedback system, i.e. Parent Forums, which gathers retrospective views on programmes, services and events. There is no evidence of parents involved on management committees. Upon comparison of these findings with Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* (1969), it is concluded that PPG2 parents appear to be involved in non- or tokenistic participation. As a result it is suggested that PPG2 parents are facilitated to have limited influence on service planning and provision. This exactly echoes the experiences of PPG1 parents.

PPG2 parents also express a degree of reticence in relation to becoming involved in feedback provision:

'...they always say that very few people show up to it [Parent Forum] to give any input...' (NRA1p9).

These parents report this reticence is as a result of feeling unskilled or concerned that they may be perceived as complaining. These themes are reflective of those reported for PPG1.

It appears that PPG2 parents, despite a consistently positive and balanced relationship with Sure Start service providers are not able to potentially influence decisions about the service which they receive beyond the operational level. There is also evidence of a reticence to become involved at this level. It is proposed that this may be due to a lack of perception of any potential benefit to the parent, child or family of being involved at this level. This finding reinforces the theme identified by PPG1.

5.4 Summary of PPG2 findings

This chapter had presented analysis of data collected from PPG2 parents registered with Rainbow Sure Start, Castlederg, County Tyrone. A number of core themes were used to direct interviews with this cohort based on literature and policy review findings and PPG1 data analysis. This approach, based on CGT, was used in order to validate findings from PPG1 data and literature review, provide additional detail to those original findings, identify 'service-specific' themes and identify areas for further examination as required. PPG2 findings will now be considered in light of the original research objectives and PPG1 data analysis findings. This information is presented in Table 5.10 along with categories for ongoing consideration.

Research Objective	Summary of PPG1 findings (universal EY services)	PPG2 findings (service-specific service)	Categories for Ongoing Consideration
1) To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	<p>i) Tokenistic or non-participation consistently experienced;</p> <p>ii) Lack of parental interest in involvement at 'citizen control' level;</p> <p>iii) Reasons for parental lack of interest in 'citizen control': lack of knowledge/awareness of potential for 'citizen control', lack of skill set to operate at this level, perception of participation at 'citizen control' level as additional responsibility;</p> <p>iv) Inconsistent evidence that maintained involvement facilitates participation at higher level e.g. management board.</p>	<p>i) Tokenistic or non-participation consistently experienced;</p> <p>ii) Limited parental interest in involvement at 'citizen control' level;</p> <p>iii) Greater awareness of RSS infrastructure to support higher level participation by PPG2 parents than PPG1 parents;</p> <p>iii) Reasons for parental lack of interest in 'citizen control': lack of knowledge/awareness of potential for 'citizen control', lack of skill set to operate at this level, perception of participation at 'citizen control' level as additional responsibility, concern of feedback as complaining;</p> <p>iv) Nil evidence that maintained involvement facilitates participation at higher level e.g. management board.</p>	<p>i) With evidence of non-/tokenistic participation for parents accessing universal and service-specific EY services, it was considered useful to examine participation in an EY service context designed to target the specific needs of a particular sub-population: Toybox project.</p> <p>ii) Evidence indicates that within a service-specific setting, knowledge of EY service structure to facilitate higher participation level involvement amongst parents (PPG2) is greater than in the broader parent population (PPG1). It was considered useful to examine attitudes to/knowledge of this level of participation in a targeted service.</p> <p>iii) With PPG1 and PPG2 report of tokenistic participation whilst accessing EY service structure designed to facilitate higher participation levels, it was considered useful to examine parent participation on parent forum/management board and the impact of that participation within a single service setting with provision targeted to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.</p>
2) To discover the impact of participation on parent involvement activity	<p>i) Inconsistent recognition of need for own involvement in EY service alongside their child;</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of link between participation level and parent involvement activity;</p> <p>iii) Direct, regular and ongoing involvement (regardless of participation level) perceived to have a positive impact with additional benefit also reported.</p>	<p>i) Consistent recognition of need for own involvement in RSS alongside their child;</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of link between participation level and parent involvement activity within RSS setting;</p> <p>iii) Direct, regular and ongoing involvement (regardless of participation level) perceived to have a positive impact with additional benefit also reported within RSS setting.</p>	<p>i) With findings of inconsistent recognition of the need for own involvement with PPG1 cohort and consistent recognition with PPG2 cohort, it was considered useful to examine this within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.</p> <p>ii) The influence of a service's historical legacy in a small community as a driver of parental involvement is clearly identified by PPG2 data, it was considered useful to examine this within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.</p> <p>iii) Consider the impact of ongoing involvement within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.</p>

<p>3) To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services.</p>	<p>i) Two stage process: 'becoming involved' and 'maintaining involvement';</p> <p>ii) 'Becoming involved' driven by: self-motivation as a result of identified need, parental capacity for self-help, personal experience, community level service information provision, professional advice and service access;</p> <p>iii) Limited PPG1 report of interest in EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education for their child(ren);</p> <p>iv) When parental need exceeds standard EY service provision, this need will often be unmet;</p> <p>v) There is a risk of obtaining inaccurate service access information when parents have limited family/social support;</p> <p>vi) 'Maintaining involvement' occurs as a result of: effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality and meeting need; and a negative experience of any of these drivers results in parent withdrawal from the service.</p>	<p>i) Two stage process: 'becoming involved' and 'maintaining involvement';</p> <p>ii) 'Becoming involved' driven by: community level Sure Start service knowledge, service access, free service, proximity, flexibility, self-motivation, capacity for self-help, professional help;</p> <p>iii) Limited PPG2 report of interest in EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education for their child(ren);</p> <p>iv) Nil evidence of parental need exceeding standard RSS service provision;</p> <p>v) Nil evidence of obtaining inaccurate RSS service access information by any PPG2 parents;</p> <p>vi) 'Maintaining involvement' occurs as a result of: effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality, meeting need, wider family involvement.</p>	<p>i) To validate the consistent finding (from PPG1 & PPG2 data) of parent involvement as a two stage process within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>ii) Given the similarity in the drivers identified for both PPG1 and PPG2 of 'becoming involved' in an EY service, it was considered useful to validate these findings by examining them within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>iii) Whilst there is a consistent report of lack of interest in EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education by both PPG1 and PPG2, the drivers underpinning the two groups differ. It was considered useful to examine parental attitude to EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>iv) Whilst there was nil evidence of PPG2 parental need exceeding RSS service provision, this was not the finding for PPG1, therefore it was considered useful to examine parental experience of need and service provision within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>v) Whilst there was nil evidence of PPG2 parents struggling to access accurate RSS service access information, this was not the finding for PPG1, therefore it was considered useful to examine service information provision, its sources and the accuracy of this information within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>vi) Given the similarity in the drivers identified for both PPG1 and PPG2 of 'maintaining involvement' in an EY service, it was considered useful to validate these findings by examining them within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.</p>
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4) To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role.	<p>i) Broad support for the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator';</p> <p>ii) Limited evidence of parental interest in the 'Parent as Educator' role;</p> <p>iii) Reported concerns about taking on this role: limited skill set and perception of role as additional responsibility</p>	<p>i) Broad support for the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator';</p> <p>ii) Consistent evidence of assumption of 'Parent as Educator' role without ascribing this label to themselves;</p> <p>iii) Limited evidence of parental concern of role as additional responsibility.</p>	Given the variation in findings across both PPG groups in relation to the construct of 'Parent as Educator', it was considered useful to examine this further within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.
5) To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services.	<p>i) Parents do perceive a role for themselves within the EY dynamic variously as Facilitator, Skills Acquisitioner or Co-ordinator with varying degrees of direct involvement with the EY service and with the capacity to shift between roles depending on perceived need;</p> <p>ii) There is a consistent lack of evidence to indicate that parents perceive their role either during their child(ren)'s preschool years and/or within the EY dynamic as that of an educator;</p> <p>iii) The perception/or lack of perception of 'parent as educator' is not a driver in parental choice to become involved in EY services.</p>	<p>i) Parents perceive their role within the EY dynamic to be Facilitator, Skills Acquisitioner or Co-ordinator;</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of shifting between roles;</p> <p>iii) Consistent evidence of PPG2 parent perception of their role as that of Educator;</p> <p>iv) The perception of 'parent as educator' is not a driver in parental choice to become involved in EY services.</p>	<p>i) Given the consistency of report across PPG1 & PPG2 regarding the nature of parentally perceived roles, it was considered useful to examine these further within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>ii) Given the inconsistency of report across PPG1 & PPG2 regarding the 'Educator' role, it was considered useful to examine this further within a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population;</p> <p>iii) Given the inconsistency of report across PPG1 & PPG2 regarding the 'Educator' role, it was considered useful to examine whether this is a driver of parental choice to become involved in a single service setting offering targeted provision to meet the needs of a specific parent sub-population.</p>

Table 5.10: Summary of findings from PPG2 mapped across to the original research objectives and PPG1 findings with areas for further consideration included

The first stage of analysis in this study was a consideration of the findings from PPG1 which were mapped across to the original research objectives. These research objectives were based on the broad findings of policy and literature review outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. As PPG1 findings reflected those from parents accessing a broad range of EY services, the next stage of the study was to examine these within a single service context with a policy focus on 'parent participation' and 'parent as educator' in order to substantiate or refute the findings. The results of this are outlined in Table 5.10. There are clear areas of both consistency and inconsistency as outlined. Given these findings it was proposed that parents recruited from a single service context, with a specific focus on 'parent participation' and supporting parents to access education services for their children, would provide data which could verify findings to date, further specify them and potentially identify others of equal significance. Results and analysis of interview findings conducted with parents recruited from a single targeted service setting (PPG3) will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis of Data for Parent Participation Group 3 (PPG3)

Word Count: 15,196

6.1 Introduction:

This chapter will present and discuss findings from the analysis of the experiences of parents registered with the Toybox project in Northern Ireland and recruited to Parent Participation Group 3 (PPG3).

The focus of this study is parent participation within EY service settings in Northern Ireland. A thorough policy review highlighted a strong emphasis on 'parent participation' and 'Parent as Educator' in policy underpinning all EY service provision in NI (DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b). Whilst the literature review provided limited or mixed findings on the implementation of participation in EY service settings (Melhuish et al, 2008; Northrop et al, 2008; MacNeill, 2009). Analysis of PPG1 data generated a number of emergent categories which, given the range of services accessed by these constituent parents, required verification by collection and analysis of data from parents accessing a single service with a clear policy focus on these two key areas. Results of analysis and comparison of data from both PPG1 and PPG2 cohorts are summarised in Table 5.10. Whilst this analysis provided some verification for PPG1 findings, there were also some inconsistencies as well as some apparent 'service-specific' categories identified.

Analysis of PPG1 data has consistently shown that a number of factors, internal and external, cause parents to engage with EY services in any given way. By choosing to examine parent experience of EY service involvement from within a single service setting, as with the PPG2 cohort, it is suggested that some of the external factors which impact on parent engagement behaviour will be the same for each parent and therefore can be more easily identified and taken account of when examining the data gathered.

In considering this, and the findings from PPG2 in comparison with PPG1, it was decided that the findings to date could be verified further through consideration of parent experiences within a single service setting providing specific support to a target parent sub-population with a specific set of needs. With needs identified already by this study as internal drivers of parent involvement behaviour, it is suggested that, by recruiting parents from the same service with apparently similar needs profiles, further information can be gathered on internal

drivers, emerging categories can be verified and defined more fully whilst new population-specific categories may also be identified. In doing this, it is suggested that this will contribute to our understanding of the process at the centre of this study: parent participation. The service which will provide the context for this third cohort (PPG3) is the Toybox project.

Toybox is a region-wide service operating across Northern Ireland in the following areas: Dungannon, Ballymena, Magherafelt, Belfast, Coalisland, Derry, Omagh, Strabane, Newry and South Armagh. It has been in operation for approximately 15 years and had 170 families registered at the point of interviewee recruitment.

It provides a rights-based service, using an outreach play-focussed early intervention model, to children aged 0-4 and their parents from the Travelling community (www.early-years.org). It is categorised as a specialist service (NHSCT, 2015) and provides the context for review of parent experiences of a specialist service for the purpose of this study. As it serves a specific sub-population, Travelling community parents of pre-schoolers, Toybox has been coded as a 'population-specific' service. It is currently managed by Early Years (formerly known as NIPPA) and funded by the Department of Education (NI).

It was launched in Northern Ireland in August 2003 in response to a policy focus on promoting social inclusion at national level and a recognition, at regional level, of a gap, and therefore externally determined need, in educational attainment between children from the Travelling community and those from the settled community (McVeigh, 2007). It is the development of this service, based on this identified gap, which has resulted in its definition as a specialist service.

The aims of Toybox (NI) are to provide a region-wide service which enhances the social, physical and emotional development of preschool Traveller children (McVeigh, 2007). It also seeks to actively promote enrolment of these children in pre-school settings (McVeigh, 2007). Service delivery is home-based in nature as it aims to '...enhance parents' understanding of the importance of stimulation and play in their children's early years, towards the social and educational development of their children...' (McVeigh, 2007, p6). This service therefore acts to support families from the Travelling community to become involved in 'external' educational services at both the pre-school and school age stage. In

doing so, it is suggested that it address a population-specific need not consistently shared by the two other parent cohorts included in this study (PPG1 & PPG2).

Currently the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), a multiagency body of representatives from the range of statutory, private and voluntary agencies involved with children and young people, has responsibility for planning and commissioning services for children and young people, including Toybox. One of the core principles of its current strategic plan is to ensure the 'inclusion of children, young people and families in planning and design of services' (CYPSP, 2014, p9).

Informed by the CYPSP strategy, the Regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) identified 'Early Years' as their key priority area 6 with an objective of 'increasing the level of Traveller participation in family support, preschool education, play and other Early Years opportunities' (EA, 2014). One of this key priority area's targets was:

'6.4: To support Traveller parents to participate in and support their children's education.' (EA, 2014).

Whilst one of the policy principles of 'The Education of Children and Young People from the Traveller Community' is 'to recognise and encourage parents as primary educators' (DE, 2010, p2).

Toybox provides a home-based play-focussed preschool service to Travelling families with children under four years of age against a national and regional policy backdrop of inclusion and participation by children and families in services, including their design, planning and delivery, with a particular focus on parents as educators. Table 6.1 outlines the interview themes derived from policy and literature review, along with the findings from PPG1 and PPG2 cohorts, to be used with PPG3.

Research Objectives	Key PPG1 findings	Key PPG2 findings	Core Themes of PPG3 Interviews
1. To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tokenistic participation • Non-participation • Limited evidence of parent participation at the 'citizen control' level • Limited interest in 'citizen control' level of participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tokenistic participation • Non-participation • Greater knowledge of service infrastructure to encourage higher level parent participation • Lack of parent interest in participation at 'citizen control' level • Nil evidence of ongoing involvement as facilitator of higher level participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation • Awareness of service infrastructure to encourage higher level participation • Interest in higher level participation (citizen control) • Link between ongoing involvement and higher level of participation
2. To discover the impact of participation on parent involvement activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent recognition of need for parental involvement in EY services • Participation level not directly related to parent involvement activity • Positive impact of direct, regular and ongoing involvement (at tokenistic/non-participation levels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of need for direct parental involvement alongside child • No link between participation and parent involvement activity • Perception of positive impact of direct regular, ongoing parent involvement activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of need for direct parental involvement alongside child • Link between participation and parent involvement activity • Perception of impact of direct regular, ongoing parent involvement activity

<p>3. To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement is a two-stage process: initial interest and maintaining involvement • Initial interest as a result of self-motivation due to identified need, parental capacity for self-help, personal experience, community level service information provision, professional advice and service access • Difficulty in obtaining specific service to meet specific parental need • Limited interest in involvement as a means to obtain education • Maintaining involvement as the result of effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality and meeting need; a negative experience of any of these drivers results in parent withdrawal from the service • Parents with limited family/social network support at risk of obtaining inaccurate service access information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement as a two-stage process • Drivers of Initial Interest: community level Sure Start service knowledge, service access, free service, proximity, flexibility, self-motivation, capacity for self-help, professional help; • Drivers of Maintaining Involvement: effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality, meeting need, wider family involvement; • Nil additional need noted • Nil interest in EY service provision as educational - assumption of role of Educator without assigning the label • No drivers of risk of non-involvement for families noted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the nature of the involvement process • Establish drivers of initial interest • Establish drivers of maintaining involvement • Does service provision meet additional need • Is there an interest in EY service provision that is educational • Are there risks of family non-involvement • Is service access information easily obtained and accurate
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4. To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad theoretical support • Limited parental perception of this as their role • Parental concerns about limited skill base • Parental reluctance to take on 'additional responsibility' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad theoretical construct • Assumption of role of Educator without assigning the label • Limited evidence of Educator role perceived as an additional responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent attitude to the construct of 'Parent as Educator' • Parent assumption of 'Educator' role
5. To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of levels of direct parent involvement • Three parent roles identified: Facilitator, Co-ordinator and Skills Acquisitioner • Limited evidence of 'Parent as Educator' role • 'Parent as Educator' not a driver of becoming involved/maintaining involvement in EY services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of parent involvement: Facilitator, Skills Acquisitioner or Co-ordinator • Automatic assumption of the role of 'Parent as Educator' • 'Parent as Educator' not a driver of becoming involved/maintaining involvement in RSS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of parent involvement • Educator role as driver of becoming involved/maintaining involvement in Toybox

Table 6.1: Summary of Study Findings to date (PPG1 & PPG2 data) with themes identified for discussion with PPG3 participants

Single semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 parents registered with Toybox using a convenience sampling approach. This sampling approach was adopted as a result of the cultural norms of the Travelling community. They viewed the researcher as separate from their community, ‘the country girl’, and therefore not to be permitted access within it. In order to gain community access, the researcher sought to develop effective working relationships with both the area Service Co-ordinators and individual Project Workers of the Toybox project.

In order to highlight this working relationship and co-operation, the researcher accompanied a given Project Worker on her visits within her allocated area. This raised the researcher’s visibility in the presence of Toybox staff. This strategy was used in order to move the researcher beyond the status of stranger for any potential participant being visited.

The purpose of this was to begin to reduce the perception of the researcher as an ‘outsider’, develop researcher-participant reciprocity and facilitate a positive experience for the participant as well as ensure the collection of rich data. This was necessary as the researcher acknowledges that she had no prior knowledge of the cultural norms of the Travelling community or potential PPG3 participants.

The researcher was unfamiliar with individual Toybox parents and the specific culture of this parent population. She was familiar with the service provision and staffing structure as a result of her professional experience as a paediatric Speech and Language Therapist. As a result of the issues outlined above, semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, recruited to PPG3, in their home and in the presence of their designated Project Worker.

Analysis was conducted on 10 of the interviews completed by parents recruited to the PPG3 group using a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach. PPG3 data was collected subsequent to the collection, coding and analysis of PPG1 and PPG2 data. The process was completed in this sequential manner in order to: i) identify population-specific emerging themes; and ii) to facilitate comparison of PPG3 findings with PPG1 and PPG2 and identify commonalities and differences.

As previously discussed, a social constructivist paradigm is applied in this study, so that the researcher takes an active role in recognising that parent reports are their interpreted realities

and interpreting what parents do not report or comprehend (Gomm, 2004). All PPG3 recruits were involved only with the Toybox service.

A summary of the demographic information revealed by PPG3 recruits during interview is provided in Table 6.2. It is included as it is assumed that the disclosure of this information by parents during interview indicates the relevance of it to the topics discussed and therefore to directly inform their reported perceptions and ideations.

PPG3 members	Sex	Attended school	Occupation	Number of children	Currently Involved with TB
TB1	F	Inconsistent school attendance - illiterate	Stay-at-home mum	3	Yes
TB2	F	No	Stay-at-home mum	3	Yes
TB3	F	Literate	Stay-at-home mum	3	Yes
TB4	F	Incomplete	Stay-at-home mum	5	No
TB5	F	Yes	Stay-at-home mum	2	Yes
TB6	F	Unsure	Stay-at-home mum	2	Yes
TB7	F	Illiterate	Stay-at-home mum	4	Yes
TB8	F	Yes	Stay-at-home mum	2	Yes
TB9	F	?	Stay-at-home mum	1	Yes
TB10	F	? recently learned to read	Stay-at-home mum	3	Yes

Table 6.2: Summary of Demographic Information for Parents in PPG3

6.2 Summary of Results: Emerging Core Categories

Table 6.3 presents a summary of core interview themes and the resultant categories and sub-categories which describe the events, experiences and perceptions reported by parents registered with Toybox:

Core Interview Themes for PPG3	Emergent Core Categories (based on PPG3)	Sub-categories
Perception of Toybox	Positive parental perception	Positive perception; Staff perceived positively; Child-focussed service.
Toybox service 'involvement' process		Service evolution; Initial interest; Maintaining involvement
Toybox service evolution	Service evolution in the Travelling community in NI	National and regional Social Inclusion policy, regional (NI) policy focus on social inclusion of the Travelling community, population-specific preschool service development, cultural norms of the Travelling community, sense of commonality, sense of trust.
Drivers of initial interest	Becoming involved in Toybox	Consolidation of parent trust in Toybox staff, Community level Toybox service knowledge, broad community involvement, parental perception of involvement as beneficial, ease of service access.
Drivers of maintaining involvement	Maintaining involvement in Toybox	Support and advice; home service provision; signposting to other services, facilitation of contact with other services, provision of additional support, development of Service User-Service Provider relationship.
Potential risk of non-involvement		
Perception of impact of parent involvement activity	Impact for parent	Emotional support to parents, signposting to other services, emotional support to parents to access additional services, practical support to parents to access additional services, provision of information on individual child's development, preparation of parents for transition to education, time to self, improved parent self-confidence.
	Impact for child	Provision of additional support directly to the child; child enjoyment, development of independence, improved self-confidence, development of social skills, development of communication skills, preparation for school, development of relationship with staff, greater integration of the children into the wider community.

Meeting of additional need	Targeted service delivery to meet 'population-specific' need	
Nature of parent involvement	See 'Parent Role'	
Nature of participation		Non-participation Tokenistic participation
Interest in participation	Limited interest in/awareness of participation/'citizen control'	
Parent Role		Facilitator of access to child Seeker of advice and support
Parent as Educator	Nil recognition of parent role as Educator	
Toybox as provider of preschool education		Recognition of service as provider of play skills development and school preparedness

Table 6.3: Summary of Core Interview themes and resultant categories and sub-categories for PPG3

With the 'zigzag' process of 'interview-code-analyze-review', it is possible to confidently state that the categories and sub-categories identified were saturated by the completion of the analysis of the tenth recruit, as no new codes were identified from the data at this point. The remainder of this chapter will involve the presentation of further results and detailed analyses of the findings summarised in Table 6.3.

6.3 Detailed Presentation of Results and Analysis for PPG3:

6.3.1 Perceptions of Toybox

PPG3 parent reports of Toybox were consistently positive:

'...I'd be lost without it...I found TB brilliant, I have no bad things to say about TB...'
(TB8p1); and:

‘...I think it’s very enjoyable...’ (TB9p11).

Toybox staff were commonly referenced alongside these positive perceptions:

‘...her [TB staff] help was unbelievable, every member of Toybox was unbelievable...’
(TB4p4); and:

‘...she’s [TB staff] more like a family member than she is in the Toybox...’ (TB8p1).

With parental recognition of Toybox's core purpose reported:

‘...I think they’re very good, it’s all about the children...at the end of the day and I think that they are very good with the children...’ (TB1).

PPG3 parent perceptions of the service were comparable in degree and consistency of positivity to those of PPG2 but contrasted with the variable reports from PPG1.

6.3.2 Drivers of Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community

To date we have considered parental experiences from a broad platform of universal EY services, with the PPG1 cohort, and those of parents involved with a single Sure Start service and constituting the PPG2 cohort. The policies and legislation underpinning these were discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. EY service provision received by PPG1 is classed as 'universal' according to the UK model of health, social and educational service provision (RCSLT, 2006). 'Universal' EY services are those which are designed to support the whole population and ensure that all children have appropriate development opportunities.

PPG2 parents are in receipt of a 'targeted' service. This label refers to specific support offered to children deemed to be at risk (NHSCT, 2015). Sure Start offered such a service to those families living in the 25% most deprived electoral wards in NI and therefore at risk of not receiving appropriate development opportunities (Perry, 2016).

Toybox is described as a 'specialist' service as it is designed to meet the specific needs of the population of parents and pre-school children from the Travelling community which has a history of poor engagement with preschool services with the resultant risk of low educational attainment and social exclusion (McVeigh, 2007).

As a result of the specific context of the Toybox project within the Travelling community in NI, the perceived needs of this community which resulted in the evolution of this service, and their particular culture, it became clear that examining the process of parent involvement would not follow in the same direction as had evolved for PPG1 and PPG2. As a result the

core interview theme of 'service involvement process' was re-shaped, as the emerging sub-categories quickly indicated the breadth of drivers impacting on individual parent involvement behaviour from across the range of environmental levels (Snell-Johns et al, 2004), to constitute 'Drivers of Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community'.

This section will consider the raw data from PPG3 interviews obtained in relation to this category and its subsequent analysis. A summary of its findings are presented in Table 6.4.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG3 data)
Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community	National and regional government Social Inclusion policy	'Promoting Social Inclusion' (OFMDFM, 2001)	
		'New Targetting Social Need' (OFMDFM, 2001)	
	Regional policy focus on social inclusion of the Travelling community	'Every School a Good School' framework (DoE, 2013)	
		'Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027' (DE, 2016b)	
		'Traveller Child on Education Action Framework' (DoE, 2013)	<i>'...Travellers [are] one of the groups that require a particular focus to close the gap in achievement and equality...' (DoE, 2013, p1)</i>
	Population-specific preschool service development	Toybox project development	
	Cultural norms of the Travelling community		<i>'...somebody came around one day to the door and wanted me to sign up for it [Toybox] and I said "What does it do?" Coming in and play with the children...for God's sake, I can do that myself...I was saying... "No, you don't understand, you have to get on with them" and I remember saying "Well, who's coming?" And she was saying...the country girl...I don't think I'd want a country girl in my house...' (TB4p15).</i>

	Sense of commonality		
	Sense of trust	Toybox staff sensitivity to cultural norms	<p><i>'...you don't want someone that you can't trust to be playing with your child...you really do need to know somebody for to be able to trust them before you can trust them with your child...' (TB5p4)</i></p> <p><i>'...[TB staff] is very understanding of Travellers...she knows the ways and she knows the boundaries...' (TB9p12)</i></p>
		Community level awareness of Toybox service	<p><i>'...she [TB staff] used to work in...my brother's childer...before I had any childer...I used to see her there...' (TB7p2)</i></p> <p><i>'...my sister-in-law had it first...' (TB10p1)</i></p>
		Perception of benefit	<i>'...she'd come in and play with the kids and I found that the children would learn more with play...' (TB10p1)</i>
		Perception of genuine interest in children	<i>'When Toybox first started off...we didn't know much about Toybox...so we looked at letting people into our home to play with the children, and it was also around the trust...but as they started playing with the children...I seen that they were interested in the children...' (TB4p1)</i>
		Length of relationship	<i>'...and as they start coming out the trust built up...' (TB4p1)</i>

Table 6.4: Summary of Emergent Categories and sub-categories of 'Drivers of Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community'

6.3.2.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community'

Six sub-categories of 'Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community' emerged from the data gathered from PPG3 parents. Once coded and categorised, as with PPG1 and PPG2 data, the sub-categories have been re-categorised as 'internal' or 'external' drivers (Snell-Johns et al, 2004). This re-categorisation is indicated in Table 6.4 by colour coding with 'internal' drivers coloured yellow and 'external' drivers coloured green. This core category has been designated as a 'population-specific' category for the reasons outlined above therefore it has no comparator in PPG1 or PPG2 data.

Three external drivers of service evolution within the Travelling community previously discussed in the 'Introduction' section of this chapter are:

Sub-category 1: National and regional government Social Inclusion policy

At national level, the growing awareness of the concept of social exclusion led the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to implement the Social Exclusion Unit, in 1998, in order to develop social policy to address increasingly recognised social inequalities. At regional level, and following on from devolution, the Northern Ireland Executive announced a local response to this policy focus with its own '*Promoting Social Inclusion*' initiative and '*New Targetting Social Need*' policy (OFMDFM, 2001).

Sub-category 2: Regional policy focus on social inclusion of the Travelling community

Evolving from these broad policy focuses, at regional level there has been a growing recognition of the Travelling community as being at potentially higher risk of social exclusion than the wider population.

In response to this recognition a number of over-arching strategy frameworks have been designed to support children from this community including the *Child Poverty Act* (2010) (cited in NIE, 2016a), the Executive's *Child Poverty Strategy* (NIE, 2016c), *Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People 2006-2016* (OFMDFM, 2006), *Learning to Learn* (DE, 2012a) and '*Traveller Child on Education Action Framework*' (DE, 2013a) as part of the broader '*Every School a Good School*' framework. This framework's priority is to 'raise standards and tackle underachievement and inequality in our education system' (DE, 2013a,

p1). This is further supported by the recent *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* (NIE, 2016b).

Sub-category 3: Population-specific preschool service development

In Northern Ireland in 2000, against the policy context described, a number of organisations including *NIPPA* (now Early Years), *Save the Children*, the *Traveller Support Movement* and local Health Visitors entered discussions in relation to setting up a service which would support Traveller child development and promote pre-school settings enrolment (McVeigh, 2007). The regional Toybox project was launched in August 2003.

Sub-category 4: Cultural norms of the Travelling community

As previously referenced, the cultural norms within the Travelling community tend towards exclusion of those considered not to be from that community with evidence of this impacting on integration of the Toybox service into the target community:

'Travellers are very paranoid about strange people coming in around their kids and that...' (TB2p4).

Sub-category 5: Sense of Commonality

In order to bridge the gap between community attitudes to those viewed as 'other' and realise the policy aim of introducing this preschool service to the community, members of the Travelling community were recruited to promote it:

"...[individual introducing the service] she's a Traveller...she signed me up for the Toybox even though I wasn't very happy signing up for it, mind you...she sat me down and explained to me, if you have any worries about the kids, you can share them...and they'll help you...I kinda thought to myself, that'd be ok to look at that part of it..." (TB4p15).

This example typifies a number of PPG3 reports of their introduction to the service. It highlights the need for a sense of commonality between parent and service provider. This commonality acts to ensure that the parent feels comfortable as a means to enhancing the probability of their engagement with the service.

The application of this strategy to ensure the acceptance and integration of Toybox into the Travelling community has been shown to be highly effective and, therefore, verifies the

importance of a 'sense of commonality' for individuals in making them feel comfortable and ensuring continued involvement as highlighted by PPG1 and PPG2 reports.

Sub-category 6: Sense of Trust

'Sense of trust' is consistently reported by PPG3 parents and therefore has been coded as a powerful internal driver of the evolution of the service within the Traveller community. The development of trust was key to ensuring Toybox success as all the Project Workers would be from the settled community. This community would be traditionally be regarded by the Travelling community with suspicion:

'...being honest about, it's very, I wouldn't have much trust in them [settled community]...' (TB1p6).

The evidence also suggests that trust was predicated on a number of factors for PPG3 parents: Toybox staff sensitivity to cultural norms; community level awareness of Toybox service; perception of benefit; perception of genuine interest in children and length of relationship. One PPG3 parent provided proof of her full trust in Toybox staff and acceptance of staff member when she reported that *'...if [TB staff] was in here I wouldn't mind going out to the kitchen making a quick cup of tea...' (TB8p3).*

6.3.2.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Toybox Service Evolution within the NI Travelling community'

PPG3 was recruited on the basis of being a 'population-specific' cohort considered to present with a specific set of preschool needs for which the Toybox project was designed. Due to the specific cultural norms of the particular parent sub-population from which the PPG3 cohort was recruited, it is also the only cohort to have had direct and consistent experience of the introduction of an EY service into its community in this study. With this background of service evolution and integration into a community with a clear culturally-driven tendency to differentiate between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and to exclude those perceived to be 'outsiders' such as service providers, this community was in a position of receiving an EY service with a cultural underpinning different to their own. As a consequence of this, it was deemed important to capture PPG3 recollections of this process in order to identify themes which would deepen understanding of the process of 'outsider' service acceptance and integration.

Whilst the cultural norms of the Travelling community described here appear to act as a population-specific barrier to service provision, on analysis, it is clear that a key driver of this attitude can be mapped to across to both PPG1 and PPG2: sense of commonality. With PPG3 data this does refer specifically to a sense of commonality between parent and service provider as a means to heightening parental sense of comfort. Whilst this driver is reflected in the findings of PPG1 and PPG2, it appears to be at its most powerful within the PPG3 cohort. It is suggested that this is because of the cohesive and consistent power of the Travelling community's cultural preference for the exclusion of anything viewed as 'other'.

As a result of this, the service provider appears to have had to give extended consideration to the modality of service introduction and evolution, for example, recruiting members of the Travelling community to promote the service, that wasn't required for the other two cohorts.

The internal driver, 'sense of trust', also appears to be an extremely powerful 'population-specific' driver for the PPG3 cohort. Whilst this driver was not identified for the other cohorts, it is suggested that several of its sub-themes can be mapped across to those for PPG1 and PPG2. For example, the relationship between parent and service provider as a driver of parent engagement with the service has been identified for both PPG1 and PPG2 however its overall power as a driver is less in comparison to that for PPG3 parents. The depth of trust of Toybox staff required by PPG3 parents is demonstrated in this example:

'...if [TB staff] was in here, I wouldn't mind going into the kitchen, making a quick cup of tea...' (TB8p3).

Therefore it is suggested that the degree of trust needed between PPG3 parents and EY staff far exceeds that required by parents from the other two cohorts.

Broad community level awareness and knowledge of the service has also been noted as a sub-theme of a 'sense of trust' for PPG3 which can be mapped across to both PPG1 and PPG2 and for whom it acted as a powerful driver of their initial interest in their respective services. For PPG3 parents, this broad community awareness of Toybox service also contributes to their development of a sense of trust in their project worker as result of indirect knowledge of her and the work she does:

'...my sister-in-law had it first...' (TB10p1).

The final sub-theme identified for PPG3's 'sense of trust' was the parental perception of benefit of involvement with Toybox. There are similarities to be drawn with the other cohorts' shared 'additional benefit' theme. It should be highlighted that it was not possible to align this PPG3 sub-theme with PPG1 and PPG2's shared driver of 'met need'. This is because PPG3 data did not provide evidence of any perception of need reported by PPG3 parents. Their reports indicate that they appear to view the purpose of Toybox as being for their children, *'..I kinda thought to myself, that'd be ok to look at that part of it...'* (TB4p15), whilst also suggesting that they were capable of offering Toybox-style support themselves:

...the basic thing you need to know is skills won't help you raise a family...you need maternal instinct and stuff like that, that's what you need to raise, or deal with your family...' (TB3p5).

There is evidence of Toybox supporting PPG3 parents with literacy issues:

'...[TB staff] doesn't really help me but because I don't need her to read letters or do forms and stuff but I know she helps some of the other girls that can't really read...' (TB3p6).

It is suggested that Toybox has adopted this role, beyond its original remit, following on from identifying this particular need amongst the PPG3 population. It is further suggested that this acts as a service provision by Toybox upon which PPG3 are dependent further solidifying Toybox's position within the Travelling community.

The final theme, newly identified by PPG3 analysis compared to analysis of the other cohorts, and therefore 'population-specific', is the need for sensitivity to the cultural norms of this community. Whilst this has been identified specifically for the Travelling community within this study, it is suggested that the strategies employed in order to ensure such sensitivity could be applied to any identified sub-population.

6.3.3 Becoming Involved in Toybox

Having given consideration to the 'population-specific' category of 'Toybox service evolution within the Travelling community', attention will now be given to the service's key aim: encouraging parents to become involved in the service. This stage of the EY service involvement process reflects that described by both PPG1 and PPG2.

A summary of findings for PPG3 is presented in Table 6.5.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG3 data)
Becoming involved in Toybox	Consolidation of parental trust in TB staff	Perception of staff interest in the children	<i>'...just to sit and watch them playing with the child, they had interest, and it wasn't, they put feelings into their job, it wasn't just their job...that child was their priority from they entered the home til they left the home....'</i> (TB4p2)
		Development of Service Provider-Service User relationship	<i>'...[TB staff] knows everything about us, she's here since I was having the children and she knows each child's name and she knows what they like...it's not as if she's coming in as a stranger anymore because I know her that well...it's like I can leave her sit there and I can go out and do the housework, or I can do something else or I can come back out and chat to her in between times...'</i> (TB3p3)
	Community level Toybox service knowledge		<i>'...she [TB staff] used to come out to my other wee niece and I used to sit down and I'd say "Oh I can't wait til you come out to us and you can do all this"...'</i> (TB8p10)
	Broad community involvement		<i>Each of the girls now, the very minute they have their babies...when they're talking...[I say] "Toybox was out today", [they say] "How do I get that? How do I get her number?"</i> (TB5p10) <i>'...there'd be nearly everybody in this camp like, all my sister-in-laws, like they would be involved in it as well...'</i> (TB1p1)
	Parental perception of involvement as beneficial		<i>'...the girls knows how good it is for the children, I think, and like they love for the children to be involved in it because they know the benefits of it...'</i> (TB5p11) <i>'...They can learn off Toybox...they can learn things and they're comfortable with Toybox...'</i> (TB2p19)
	Ease of service access		<i>'...the girls [TB staff] came round and tell everyone anyway...they introduced themselves...came round the houses...'</i> (TB5p1) <i>'...she came to me and then I'd get the form, you know the way that you have to fill in a form? That you agree to her to come in? I filled that in as well...'</i> (TB7p4)

Table 6.5: Summary of Emergent Categories and sub-categories of 'Becoming Involved in Toybox' (PPG3)

6.3.3.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Becoming Involved in Toybox'

Five sub-categories of 'becoming involved in Toybox' emerged from the data provided by PPG3 parents. As with PPG1 and PPG2, these categories were further specified, during the CGT analysis process, as either 'internal' or 'external' drivers of becoming involved (Snell-Johns et al, 2004). This categorisation is indicated in Table 6.5 by the colour coding of the boxes for 'sub-categories' (yellow for 'internal' and green for 'external' drivers).

PPG3 data has generated three 'population-specific' categories (consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff, broad community involvement, parental perception of involvement as beneficial) with no similarities to PPG1 or PPG2 data. Its other two categories (community level Toybox service knowledge, ease of service access) can be mapped to both PPG1 and PPG2 data.

Sub-category 1: Consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff

With 'sense of trust' identified as the single most powerful driver in facilitating the inception and evolution of Toybox within the Travelling community in Northern Ireland, it appears to also contribute to PPG3 parental interest in becoming involved in this service. This appears to occur in two ways: 'perception of staff interest in the children' and 'development of Service User-Service Provider relationship'.

This internal 'population-specific' sub-category appears to be derived from indirect parent knowledge of the service and TB staff as a result of the longevity of the service and the visibility of staff. As a result PPG3 parents will have received knowledge of the service and will use this as a basis upon which to make a decision regarding their own direct involvement: consolidation of trust.

Sub-category 1: Consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff = Conclusion

This internal 'population-specific' sub-category appears to be underpinned by the longevity and visibility of the Toybox service in a close-knit community where knowledge of it is shared easily among potential service users. With this profile, it is possible to draw some comparison with PPG2 data and the evolution and establishment of Rainbow Sure Start in a small rural community.

Sub-category 2: Community Level Toybox service knowledge

This external sub-category is directly linked to sub-category 'Consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff' as discussed above. It can also be mapped to PPG2's 'community level Sure Start service knowledge' indicating how indirect knowledge of the service through awareness of involvement by peers acts to encourage potential parents to become involved since they already have some degree of familiarity with the service and its operation. It is suggested that it is the effort on the EY service's part to ensure the visibility of the service within the community which is responsible for this.

Sub-category 2: Community Level Toybox service knowledge = Conclusion

This external sub-category is reflective of PPG2's 'community level Sure Start service knowledge' and is therefore categorised as a 'service-specific' rather than 'population-specific' sub-category.

Sub-category 3: Broad community involvement

This has been categorised as a 'population-specific' sub-category. However similarities can be drawn between this and PPG1 and PPG2's 'sense of commonality'. Whilst this sub-category was identified for both cohorts in relation to 'maintaining involvement' in their respective EY services, it is suggested that it exerts influence in parent participation behaviours earlier in the process for PPG3 parents than for the other two parent groups. This sub-category is closely linked with 'Consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff' since it appears that the act of observing peers allow Toybox staff to enter their home and play with the children acts to shape parental behaviour in the same way.

Sub-category 3: Broad community involvement = Conclusion

This external 'population-specific' category is closely linked to 'consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff' and shares similarities with PPG1 and PPG2's 'sense of commonality'.

Sub-category 4: Parental perception of involvement as beneficial

There is consistent PPG3 report of parental perception of their involvement in Toybox as beneficial for the children. There is no evidence of parental report of benefit to the parent other than the indirect one of being free to complete housekeeping tasks:

‘...Toybox, I think it’s great the way [TB staff] comes out and that...it’s a good help, it’s great the way you can get everything, well nearly everything done...your work done, [TB staff]’s playing with your children...’ (TB2p1)

Sub-category 4: Parental perception of involvement as beneficial = Conclusion

This internal sub-category is designated as 'population-specific'. It has been categorised in this way due, partly, to the limitation of the perception itself, with parents consistently referencing benefit to only the child with no reference to benefit to the parent. This differs from that reported by both PPG1 and PPG2 who were able to identify need, both the child's and their own, and used this identified need as a driver of their own participation behaviours discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 under the sub-category headings of 'becoming involved' and 'maintaining involvement'.

Sub-category 5: Ease of Service Access

The reports leading to the definition of this evidence as an external sub-category bear close similarity to those of PPG2 coded under 'Service Access'. Whilst this is also identified as a sub-category for PPG1, the evidence indicates that PPG1 parents had much more mixed experience of ease of access in comparison to either PPG2 and PPG3. Both these latter cohorts experienced 'ease of access' which appears to be as a result of the provision and accessibility of information about their respective EY services by the services as well as the visibility of the services within their designated communities. Therefore it is suggested that this is a 'service-specific' sub-category rather than a 'population-specific' one.

Sub-category 5: Ease of Service Access = Conclusion

The evidence indicates that potential participants have easy access to the Toybox service and report similar experiences to those reported by PPG2 parents.

6.3.3.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Becoming Involved in Toybox'

Five drivers of parent interest in becoming involved in Toybox have been identified. These have been further categorised as two internal drivers: 'consolidation of parental trust in Toybox staff' and 'parental perception of involvement as beneficial'; and three external drivers: 'community level Toybox service knowledge', 'broad community involvement' and 'ease of service access'.

'Community level Toybox service knowledge' can be mapped to PPG2's 'community level Sure Start service knowledge' and, less directly, to PPG1's 'community level service information provision'. It is suggested that the impact of community level service knowledge for PPG3 parents is to exert more influence in persuading parents to become involved, than that experienced by PPG1 and PPG2 cohorts, as a result of the service's prominence as the only 'outside' Early Year service in a close-knit community.

The evidence suggests that 'broad community involvement' is a 'population-specific' driver since there is no evidence of such wholesale involvement by the parent population across the other cohorts, including PPG2 which was a 'service-specific' population. As this is 'targeted' provision it is suggested that this indicates the success of the service in accessing its target population particularly given its cultural norms.

The driver, 'ease of service access', is shared with PPG2 parents. It is suggested that this is because PPG2 and PPG3 parents have shared similar experiences of knowledge of the service's location/access, proximity and staff and indirect awareness of service provision due to received knowledge from peers as a result of their respective services' visibility within their communities.

The internal driver, 'parental perception of involvement as beneficial', differs from PPG1 and PPG2 reports of involvement as beneficial in terms of the timing of its reporting. For PPG3 this is identified at the earlier stage of the EY involvement process, 'becoming involved' and for the two other cohorts, it is identified at the 'maintaining involvement' stage.

Based on PPG3 reports, this theme has been given further definition as a result of the reports of the nature of perceived benefit: opportunities for the children to play and learn and for parent to continue with their domestic work.

PPG3 parents frequently refer to 'play' and 'learning' in reference to their children's involvement in Toybox. This does differ from PPG1 and PPG2 reports who tended to refer to socialisation opportunities and the need for practical advice and support as the sub-themes of their 'self-motivation' to seek involvement with EY services. It is suggested that this difference may be as a consequence of the information which they are receiving from Toybox staff about the nature of their interaction with the children:

‘...at the start, she explained to me what she was doing...she was explaining to me why she was playing with him and what this was doing for him and the colours, the sound, stuff like that...’ (TB3p4).

It is suggested that this perception of benefit is informed directly by information received by PPG3 parents from Toybox staff and relayed to the researcher during interview.

There is no evidence of PPG3 parents reporting their identification of need for either themselves or their children during interviews for this study. It is suggested that this may be as a result of the researcher being viewed as an ‘outsider’ and therefore less trustworthy:

‘... you know nothing about us, coming here, [we] know not to take you in...’ (TB3p3).

It is further suggested that this wariness, alongside a Travelling community norm to not disclose personal business to others, even from their own community, *‘...because we’re Travellers and that [discussing needs] doesn’t go down well...’ (TB9p9)*, has caused the recorded lack of evidence of parental ability to identify need as identified in this study. As a result, it is not possible to conclude whether PPG3 parents are unable to identify need or merely reluctant to admit their identified needs to an ‘outsider’.

In relation to initial interest in Toybox, the theme of trust remains a very powerful one. It is a ‘population-specific’ internal driver and parental report suggests that it is based on increasing parental recognition of Toybox staff’s commitment to their children and to the strengthening relationship that they develop with their assigned project worker. In the context of initial interest in becoming involved in the service, it differs from that discussed as part of the process of service evolution. The difference is the consolidation of an emerging trust as a consequence of received knowledge of the service through direct peer experience of the service and indirect observation of it.

6.3.4 Maintaining Involvement in Toybox

It was considered useful for this study to seek to verify PPG1 and PPG2 findings which indicates, to date, that parent involvement in EY services is a two stage process. Given the particular profile of the sub-population served by Toybox, with a proven lack of engagement by the Travelling community with pre-school services, it was considered that examining parent reports of maintaining their involvement, or otherwise, with the service would offer further specification of the themes already identified from PPG1 and PPG2 data. This was also judged to be particularly useful given the strong population needs focus of Toybox and its supporting policy. PPG3 data coded under the umbrella term 'maintaining involvement in Toybox' will now be considered. A summary of findings is presented in Table 6.6.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Parent Views (samples from PPG3 data)
Maintaining Involvement in Toybox	Support and advice	<i>'...if I had any worries about the child, I could sit down and talk about it [to TB staff]...I...have a wee boy that would have been hyperactive...and if I'd any worries with [child], I could sit down and explain to [TB staff] and [TB staff] would have helped me talk through it...I had somebody to talk to and I wasn't afraid to express my feelings because I knew it wasn't going outside the house...'</i> (TB4p3)
	Home service provision	<i>'...Toybox, I think it's great, the way [TB staff] comes out and that...'</i> (TB2p1) <i>'...that was important...because...if it was anywhere else, I wouldn't be able to get out for it...there's too much for to do...'</i> (TB6p3/4)
	Signposting to other services	<i>'I wouldn't have got him a Speech Therapist cos I wouldn't have thoughted to do that but they did...'</i> (TB5p2) <i>'...she [TB staff] gives me [information on] whatever's going on up there [community centre]...'</i> (TB3p11)
	Facilitation of contact with other services	<i>'...he probably wouldn't be in school today because I wouldn't have had the confidence to go to a school to say I can't read and write...I wouldn't a known how to went about it...only for [TB staff]...she got them [children] into Barnardos for me, then from there she came with me, we met, when they had to go to P1 and P2, and my children's been in school from that...'</i> (TB1p3)
	Provision of additional support	<i>'...I know the girls would miss her [TB staff] very bad because she does all the letters...helps them...'</i> (TB3p7)
	Development of Service User-Service Provider relationship	

Table 6.6: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Maintaining involvement in Toybox'

6.3.4.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Maintaining Involvement in Toybox'

Six sub-categories of 'maintaining involvement in Toybox' emerged from PPG3 participant data. These have also all been categorised as 'external' sub-categories (Snell-Johns et al, 2004) and therefore are colour coded green in Table 6.6.

Whilst PPG3 parents did not specify any identified need for seeking or maintaining involvement in Toybox, analysis of their interviews provided evidence which the researcher has designated as drivers of maintenance of parent involvement in the service. Analysis will be now be presented on a sub-category by sub-category basis.

Sub-category 1: Support and advice

This external sub-category is shared with PPG1 and PPG2. It differs from both these in that, for both PPG1 and PPG2, it is reported as a self-identified need and therefore as driver of 'becoming involved' as it was identified at this earlier stage of the involvement process. For PPG3, it was identified at the 'maintaining involvement' stage, where it is reported as a service involvement outcome. This fits the pattern identified to date in PPG3 report of a lack of report of parentally identified need. The manner of PPG3 reporting suggests that these parents identified the support and advice received as an additional, if unanticipated, benefit due to their lack of perception of need.

Sub-category 1: Support and advice = Conclusion

This is an external 'population-specific' sub-category.

Sub-category 2: Home service provision

This is a 'population-specific' driver which is consistently reported across the PPG3 cohort. There is a consistently reported sub-theme of not being able to get out to attend other services. This is usually explained as a lack of available time:

'...she [TB staff] always informs me what's going on up there [community centre] if I would like to go but I just don't have the time...' (TB3p4).

Therefore this home service exactly meets a 'population-specific' need.

Sub-category 2: Home service provision = Conclusion

This is an external 'population-specific' sub-category.

Sub-category 3: Signposting to other services

This has been categorised as an external 'population-specific' sub-category. It refers the support offered by Toybox staff to parents when additional support is required. It is suggested that this level of service is the direct opposite of that experienced by some PPG1 parents who reported unmet additional needs due to service provision restrictions. This shortfall may be explained in terms of the 'universal' nature of the service accessed by PPG1 parents in comparison to the 'targeted' service provision offered by Toybox as evidenced here. It is suggested that Toybox have successfully matched Service User need to EY service provision.

Sub-category 3: Signposting to other services = Conclusion

This is an external 'population-specific' sub-category.

Sub-category 4: Facilitation of contact with other services

There is strong evidence of parental need for support in order to undertake interaction and facilitate communication with services e.g. school:

'...going to the meetings with the school and me, what I couldn't understand what they were telling me, [TB staff] was able to explain to me...' (TB4p4).

This need appears to be as a direct result of reported literacy issues. The reported impact for PPG3 parents of literacy issues is reduced confidence resulting in the need for this support. This is closely linked with the sub-category 'sign-posting to other services' and results from targetted Toybox service provision to address population-specific need.

Sub-category 4: Facilitation of contact with other services = Conclusion

This is an external 'population-specific' sub-category.

Sub-category 5: Provision of additional support

The evidence suggests that Toybox staff are offering direct support to parents from the Travelling community with literacy issues:

'...we're getting letters through the door every day we can't read, so we're wanting to know what's on that letter...that [letter received] was really bothering me all last night, now I was looking at that going I wonder what does that mean? There's nobody in here to read it...so I was glad to see [TB staff] this morning...' (TB1p23).

Whilst this form of support was not outlined in the original service aims, it is suggested that this is a 'population-specific' need which the service has moved to support. Evidence

obtained indicates that meeting this need acts a powerful driver of ongoing involvement by parents from the Travelling community therefore securing Toybox's place within the community (as previously discussed).

Sub-category 5: Provision of additional support = Conclusion

This is an external 'population-specific' sub-category.

Sub-category 6: Development of Service User - Service Provider relationship

As previously highlighted, the parent-TB staff relationship is founded on a sense of trust. PPG3 report indicates that the development of that trust has been a slow and intense process. For PPG3 parents who have a long-standing relationship with Toybox and, more specifically, their Toybox project worker, the outcome of the emergence of that relationship is that they now regard their designated worker as a close ally:

'...[TB staff] 's been with me like for all that time...and now like...[TB staff] 's like one of the family...' (TB1p4).

One identified outcome of that is to cause PPG3 parents to experience greater involvement:

'...I go to nearly every project that comes up with [TB staff], I'm always at it...' (TB8p1).

Therefore it is concluded that this relationship serves to maintain parental involvement in Toybox.

These PPG3 reports reflect and add further specification to those of PPG1 who indicated that the nature of this relationship had direct bearing on the level of involvement experienced by them. It should be noted that PPG1 parents, even with this higher degree of participation, did not experience participation above the level of non- or tokenistic participation.

It is the reported depth and strength of these relationships, by PPG3 parents, that has resulted in their reports being coded as a separate sub-category rather than just as an initial code as occurred for PPG1.

Sub-category 6: Development of Service User-Service Provider relationship = Conclusion

This is an external 'population-specific' sub-category.

6.3.4.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Maintaining Involvement in Toybox'

Six 'population-specific' sub-categories of maintaining parent involvement in Toybox have been identified for the PPG3 cohort. These act to address the very specific needs of the Travelling community and therefore cannot be mapped directly on to those identified for PPG1 or PPG2. There are similarities across the cohorts, however, and these will be discussed below.

'Signposting to other services' has been categorised separately due to the volume of evidence obtained from PPG3 interviews. This has been found to be similar to some parental reports of signposting by PPG1 parents. These were single reports and were included under the broader label of 'meeting need' for the PPG1 cohort.

'Support and advice' echoes both PPG1 and PPG2's 'meeting need' which was developed as an umbrella term to incorporate the range of parentally identified need outlined in 'drivers of parent interest' in their respective EY service for both cohorts. The evidence suggests that PPG3 parents do not routinely report their own identified need. This differs from PPG1 and PPG2 parents who do, with the need for support and advice clearly identified as a key component of that driver. It is suggested that it is only at the point of receipt of service that PPG3 are able to identify this as a driver for maintaining EY service involvement and an outcome of 'becoming involved'. It is unclear as to whether this is due to a lack of parental recognition of need at the point of initial parent interest in becoming involved in EY service or a reluctance to admit a self-identified need to an outsider (as previously discussed).

'Development of service user-service provider relationship' has been found to directly inform the degree of participation by PPG3 parents. This concept has already been discussed for the PPG1 cohort where there was inconsistent evidence to verify the suggestion that the SU-SP relationship directly impacts parental maintenance of involvement in their respective EY service. In relation to evidence from the PPG3 group, it appears to have a more powerful effect and therefore it has been designated as a separate driver. It is also suggested that the consistency of evidence from PPG3 parents supports the proposal that the nature of the SU-SP relationship will directly influence the likelihood of a parent maintaining their involvement in their EY service.

6.3.5 Impact of Toybox Involvement

PPG3 reports of their perceptions of the impact of their involvement are discussed next. This was identified as a core interview theme with parents recruited to this cohort as a means of verifying the previously obtained mixed reports from PPG1, of both additional benefit and unmet need, and PPG2, of consistently met need which resulted in consistent reports of a positive impact of involvement in RSS. Given this mixed profile it was decided to examine this theme with a 'population-specific' cohort. Table 6.7 presents a summary of findings.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories		Initial Codes	Parent Views (samples from PPG3 data)
Parental perception of impact of involvement in Toybox service	External change (parent)	Direct impact (parent)	Emotional support to parent	<p><i>'...everything is confidential as I said, if you cry your heart out to them, that's still left there when they go...' (TB4p5)</i></p> <p><i>'...to sit there and get talking to [TB staff] when she comes out...' (TB7p6)</i></p>
			Signposting to other services	<p><i>'...she [TB staff] introduced me to Barnardos, which I have never known about...' (TB1p3)</i></p> <p><i>'...[TB staff] then tells me about courses coming on...I mentioned to [TB staff] that I'd like to...read and write...and then [TB staff]'s getting on...the ball for that for me...' (TB7p7)</i></p>
			Emotional support to parents to access additional services	<p><i>'...I wouldn't have had the confidence to go to a school to say I can't read and write...I wouldn't know how to went about it...so I wouldn't have went, only for [TB staff]...' (TB1p3)</i></p> <p><i>'...[TB staff] backed me all the way to school, even came to, was it one or two meetings at the school [TB staff] came to with me?' (TB4p4)</i></p>
			Practical support to parents to access additional services	<i>'...register with other groups, if I wanted to go to any groups and they're [TB staff] very helpful with forms and stuff...' (TB6p3)</i>
			Provision of information on individual child's development	<p><i>'...where [TB staff] is always there, and you can always say, every day when she is there...'well, how did you find her in her speech?'...' (TB4p9)</i></p> <p><i>'...if they found the children was...slow in any way or if there was anything worrying them, they'd explain what to use and they would get, like, the Health Visitor round to them...' (TB4p1)</i></p>

		Indirect impact (parent)	Preparation of parents for transition to education	<i>'...the fear of sending them to school, are they going to be alright?...I couldn't leave him that long...it took me ages for...to be able to leave him without crying...' (TB5p6)</i>
			Time to self	<i>'...to give you a bit of time to yourself for a hour...you get your own things done around the house...' (TB6p5)</i> <i>'...it just gives me that bit of a break and it gives him that bit of a break...' (TB8p4)</i>
			Improved self-confidence (parent)	<i>'...now I got more confidence in myself I can talk...I start getting out to places with, and get talking to settled people, not just travellers...so I think that mix that I did do actually done me the best in the world...' (TB8p18)</i> <i>'...I feel stronger because the girls have helped me so much...and now I'm not afraid to say what I think, if a doctor [says] "well there's nothing wrong", I say "Look, he's mine, I'm with him 24/7"...you see him all of ten, fifteen minutes, mother knows best...where before I wouldn't have, I'd be afraid to say it...' (TB4p6)</i>
	External change (child)	Direct impact (child)	Provision of additional support to child	<i>'...[TB staff] was there at one stage when [child]...was about 5...I'd just nipped to the kitchen to get a drink and he said "I'm getting in trouble at school and I don't know why"...so...when [child] then left the room, [TB staff] explained to me and she said we'll have to look into this...' (TB4p3/4)</i>
			Enjoyment	<i>'.. every time they see [TB staff] 's car, they'll roar...' Here's the toy woman coming"...the childer just loves it...' (TB7p5)</i>
			Preparation for school	<i>'...getting them used to going to school...there's no way would he a went to school without the girls here playing with him cos he</i>

	Internal change (child)			<i>doesn't hardly get out of the house and he doesn't really mix and he was very very clingy and attached and without the girls coming here there's no way he would have went to school...to get him used interacting with other people...' (TB5p3)</i>
			Development of relationship with staff	<i>'...the girls coming out and playing with him...he was very very attached...' (TB5p1)</i> <i>'...and the child built up the relationship with Toybox as well...' (TB4p3)</i>
			Development of independence	<i>'...get the child not attached to me as much...they have more space away from me, they trust, there's that much more trust that I'm still there when they come back...' (TB4p5)</i>
			Improved self-confidence	<i>'...their confidence...' (TB5p11)</i>
			Development of social skills	<i>'...he's learning to share...he can share more with toys and playing more with them...' (TB6p2)</i> <i>'...he started to mix up a bit with children...' (TB8p13)</i>
			Development of communication skills	<i>'...he's communicating a lot more...' (TB6p3)</i> <i>'...learning, listening, focussing...' (TB8p4)</i>
		Indirect impact (child)	Greater integration of the children within the wider community	<i>'...because they're [TB staff] coming in, sit playing with the childer...stead of just like, travelling childer mixing or travelling childer mixing with the kids, settled women as well coming in mixing with them...it'll learn childer when childer goes to school...' (TB7p2)</i>

Table 6.7: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Impact of Toybox Involvement' (PPG3)

6.3.5.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Impact of Toybox Involvement'

Analysis of PPG3 data has resulted in the coding of a number of impacts (recorded as sub-categories in Table 6.7) for both parent and child. These have been further categorised for these two groups according to whether the reports cited direct or indirect impacts. They were also re-categorised based on the nature of change, internal or external, that these reported impacts exerted. A detailed discussion of this range of reported impacts for parent and child of involvement in Toybox will now be presented.

Whilst there is clear evidence of an initial reluctance by parents from the Travelling community to engage with Toybox:

'...somebody came around one day to the door and wanted me to sign up for it [Toybox] and I said "What does it do?" Coming in and play with the children...for God's sake, I can do that myself...' (TB4p15);

there is also considerable evidence indicating retrospective parental acknowledgement of the impact of such involvement for them and their children. These are presented below.

Sub-category 1: Direct Impact (parent)

Direct impacts of Toybox involvement for PPG3 parents have been initially coded as: emotional support to parents; signposting to other services; emotional support to parents to access additional services; practical support to parents to access additional services; provision of information on individual child's development and preparation of parents for transition to education.

It is suggested that these are 'population-specific' impacts as a consequence of the flexible approach that Toybox appears to adopt in response to the needs of the target population. There are no similarities between these PPG3 reports and those from the other two cohorts suggesting that this service actively sought to address 'local need' as per the original aims of UK EY services (Glass, 1999, p258).

Sub-category 2: Indirect Impact (parent)

PPG3 report suggests that the indirect impact of involvement for them in Toybox is: time to self. This reported impact is of particular interest in light of the original aims of the service, one of which was to '...enhance parents' understanding of the importance of stimulation and play in their children's early years, towards the social and educational development of their

children...' (McVeigh, 2007, p6). As a result of these reports, consideration was then given to parental perception of their role in the development of their children. This will be discussed later in the Section 6.3.6 'Parent Role in Toybox'.

Whilst socialisation opportunities were routinely reported as a commonly identified need contributing to drivers of initial interest in becoming involved in EY services for both PPG1 and PPG2 parents, this was not the case for PPG3 parents. PPG3 parents have been noted as tending not to outline their needs, within the context of interviews for this study, as previously discussed.

PPG3 parents did, however, identify socialisation opportunities in their reports of impact of their involvement:

'...when you get talking to the other mothers like there's things you can tell them and things they can tell you back...I've made a lot of friends in it...not just with travellers, with settled ladies as well...I really like it...' (TB8p6);

and:

'...the main thing I enjoyed was just getting the child out for an hour...and getting him to see something different and playing with a different person and watching him play with that person and him interacting...' (TB9p14).

It is also of interest that these socialisation opportunities have been shared, not just within the Travelling Community, but across both the Travelling and settled communities. Therefore it is suggested that involvement in this particular EY service has contributed to some degree of integration between these two communities. It is further suggested that this impact beginning to meet the aim of the Social Inclusion policy (OFMDFM, 2001; DE, 2013a).

The impacts outlined so far have been those which have resulted in an external change for PPG3 parents. For example, they have been able to access more services or had more time to themselves. Whilst this form of impact was the most commonly reported type, there was some evidence of the impact of involvement with Toybox exerting reported internal change. This will be discussed below.

Sub-category 3: Indirect impact/internal change (parent)

PPG3 reports of improved parent self-confidence appear to have contributed to parental attitudes to their own education:

‘...it’s time now to learn how to read...’ (TB7p10).

Given the methodological concern in relation to the potential impact of the interviewer effect, particularly in relation to the Travelling community and their reported perception of the interviewer as ‘other’, it is suggested that this example is genuine proof of that reported increased confidence.

Sub-category 4: Direct impact/external change (child)

For the children, PPG3 reports have evolved four types of direct impact of service involvement resulting in external change in the child; provision of additional support directly to the child; child enjoyment; preparation for school and development of relationship with staff.

Sub-category 5: Direct impact/internal change (child)

PPG3 reports have resulted in the coding of four types of direct impact of service involvement resulting in internal change in the child: development of independence; improved self-confidence; development of social skills and development of communication skills.

The examples in Table 6.7 reflect a bigger body of reports gathered from PPG3 parents to support the definition of a sub-theme for the impact of involvement: ‘development of relationship with staff (by child)’. This is the first time this theme has been mentioned by parents across all three PPG cohorts. This can be explained as a consequence of the nature of service delivery with Toybox staff providing a home-based service directly to the child. Whilst service was provided directly to individual children from other PPG cohorts depending on the service accessed, this cohort is the only one to consistently report experience of it across the service. It is also suggested that whilst Toybox is designed to provide input directly to the children, there is an additional aim of indirectly supporting parents to enhance their understanding of the role of stimulation and play in their child’s development (McVeigh, 2007).

Sub-category 6: Indirect impact/internal change (child)

PPG3 report suggest parental perception of impact of Toybox involvement to include the greater integration of the children within the wider community and an associated perception of that as beneficial. This reflects that reported for parents as discussed above (Improved self-confidence - parent). This impact for both parents and children of increased integration on a broader community level has been categorised as a 'population-specific' impact.

Additional Comments:

As a result of PPG3 parents tending not to refer to 'met' or 'unmet need' in relation to their motivation to become involved in Toybox or their perception of the impact of such involvement, it has not been possible to detect evidence to support the sub-themes of 'additional benefit' and 'unmet need' applied to PPG1 and PPG2.

There is evidence of PPG3 commentary on more general aspects of the Toybox service. This commentary has focussed on:

- Perception of Service changes:

'...there was more, cos it all stopped now...It's still good but it would be gooder if they still had a had the other things going as well...' (TB10p4).

These reports made reference to perceived cuts to specific services, such as childcare provision to support parents to attend training courses, Parent Days and trips away.

- Service provision limitations perceived to have a negative impact for both parents:

'...I haven't got [TB staff] anymore cos the children are older...I do miss them badly [TB staff] and it's just a pity they have to go when children is a certain age because even though the children turn five, you still need them...so basically I have to try and do all this myself where half the things, if [TB staff] was there to explain to me, I could get it done quicker, now that I haven't got them, I'm back to square one again...' (TB4p6);

and their children:

'...the children is losing out...the age of 5 when they are five there's a big change because they are heading to school...but actually I think that's what they need...they need to support more...' (TB4p7).

This parent suggests that the service should *'...be there right until the child is 10 or 11, actually they should be there whenever you need them...not be taken away...'* (TB4p7) as the impact of the loss of service for her is that *'...I'm lost without them to be honest...'* (TB4p17) and her child thinks that *'...they did something wrong, when they don't come back anymore and then you're sitting down explaining to a five year old, well, no, you're going to school now, they can't come anymore...'* (TB4p7).

6.3.5.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Impact of Toybox Involvement'

PPG3 parents were readily able to identify impact of being involved in Toybox for both themselves and their children. This range of impact was reported as wholly positive. Many of these positive impacts can be mapped across to those reported by PPG1 and PPG2 parents. It is, however, suggested that the degree of impact experienced by PPG3 parents is greater than that experienced by parents from the other cohorts. This may be as a result of the 'population-specific' need of this particular cohort and the nature of the relationships developed between PPG3 parents and Toybox parents in order to ensure that their children receive appropriate play and stimulation to support their development.

It is recognised that there is a risk that PPG3 parents tend not to report identified need for a service but do report impact of service involvement retrospectively. Whilst this may be due to a stated reluctance to discuss family issues with an 'outsider', their reporting of impact could be viewed as the actioning of their own increased confidence due to Toybox involvement with the resultant outcome of a recommendation of such involvement:

'...I'd encourage anybody to sign up for Toybox...including my own daughter what I have signed up...' (TB4p16).

6.3.6 Parent Role in Toybox

As mentioned in the last section, one of the original aims of the Toybox service was to support parents to understand their role in the educational and social development of their children (McVeigh, 2007). The evidence cited in previous sections indicates that parents do report a perception of positive impact of their involvement in the service. This sits alongside a lack of evidence of parentally reported identified need to become involved in Toybox. As a result of these findings and those from both PPG1 and PPG2, where there is a consistent lack of recognition of the policy-driven 'Parent as educator' role, an exploration of PPG3 parents' perceptions of the role within the family involvement in Toybox was considered essential.

This was in order to ascertain the progress made by the service in supporting parents to have a direct role in stimulating and playing with their child as a means to ensuring their educational and social development. A summary of the findings from PPG3 are presented in Table 6.8.

Emergent Core Categories	Sub-categories	Parent Views (samples from PPG3 data)
Parent role in Toybox	Provider of access to child	<i>'...we had to be there while they [TB staff] were playing with the children, we couldn't leave the room at any stage or time which was told to us...' (TB4p1)</i>
	Seeker of advice and support	<i>'...they teach you how to play with the child, especially for his speech...you see them bringing out the toys and they're more educational toys so, I go and I buy the more educational toys for to learn them shapes for to put into the buses and the jigsaws and you know then what to buy then for to learn them even more...at home...' (TB5p7)</i> <i>'...where I wouldn't have understood first what to do with them, or how to help them even though I wanted to help them, I wouldn't know how to start to help them...if I hadn't been shown, even sitting there watching, I wouldn't have a clue...' (TB4p11);</i> <i>'...there's things there that I wouldn't really have thought about doing with them...I didn't understand that it was as good as what it is for them...me myself learning reading to them...instead of just letting them read to theirselves...I know what to do with them...' (TB8p14)</i>

Table 6.8: Summary of Emergent Categories of 'Parent Role' in Toybox

6.3.6.1 Analysis of Core Category: 'Parent Role in Toybox'

PPG3 reports in relation to their involvement in direct service provision have been coded and labelled (see Table 6.8). As a result of this process, it is concluded that the findings are 'population-specific' and bear no resemblance to the findings for PPG1 and PPG2.

Closer analysis indicates that PPG3 parents consistently report direct contact between Toybox staff and the children:

'...she brings her own toys or she brings her own books, jigsaws, stuff like...she does that with the children first...' (TB3p2).

There is also evidence of staff explaining to parents what they are doing and why they are doing it during this interaction:

'...she'd [TB staff] explain to me [what she's doing with the child]...' (TB3p2).

It is suggested that this is a strategy employed by Toybox staff to indirectly inform parents of activities and strategies to support child development. PPG3 reports suggest that this has been successful in extending PPG3 parental awareness of the role of play in education and preparedness for school:

'They were also educating the children for to learn how to play when they go to playschool, P1, learning to interact and play with other people...' (TB4p1);

'I find it's sorta getting them ready for school...' (TB6p1); and:

'...it'll learn the childer when childer goes to school...' (TB7p2).

However there is a lack of evidence to indicate that PPG3 parents now perceive a direct role for themselves within this dynamic:

'...you can get [involved] yourself if you want...I don't really think maybe too much about it in that kinda way...I just would have enjoyed her coming...have a bit of a rest like...and nothing to do with the baby like...while she's [TB staff] doing that [playing with child] I could even like, tidy up around or tidy the kitchen or something while she was doing that...' (TB9p6); and:

'...you're about when the girls are coming in and stuff...you have to be there...' (TB5).

As a result of this it is concluded that PPG3 parents tend to adopt a passive role in the service provision dynamic. This appears to be most closely aligned to the Co-ordinator role identified for PPG1 and PPG2 cohorts. This suggestion is supported by some PPG3 reports of limited direct play interaction between parent and child:

'...well an odd time...if the children was playing toys on the floor, I'll put them on the floor and I'll sit with them...that is an odd time...' (TB7p11).

There continues to be evidence of PPG3 parents perceiving involvement in Toybox as an opportunity for *'...a bit of a break for yourself...' (TB6p1)* and *'...it gave me a bit of peace for half an hour...' (TB5p2).*

In relation to the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator', there is limited PPG3 report to indicate recognition within this cohort of their potential role as an educator. Possible reasons for this may be due to parental experience of receiving limited or no educational experience:

'...for I never finish school, I never finished school...' (TB4p4); and:

'...I can't read and write, I can write my name but that would be about it...never went to school...' (TB1p5).

For some PPG3 parents the impact of this has been to cause them to adopt a deficit approach to this in relation to supporting the education of their own children:

'...[child] can come home at night and write his own name, do his own homework, add up his own sums, to me that's very good for a child that's not getting help from his parents at home, not that we don't want to help him, we'd love to help him but we can't cos we can't read and write...' (TB1p4).

Alongside this perception of a deficit in their own skill base in relation to supporting the education of their children, there is some evidence of increasing awareness of the need for education within their own community:

'...I want them to be able to have a education to be able to have a job, there's no jobs now, they have to have a little bit of knowledge for to try and get something...' (TB5p13).

There is also PPG3 report of an emerging awareness of the potential for these parents to make a contribution in this process as a result of their interaction with Toybox:

'...[TB staff] 's sit down, she'd take out all the toys and while [TB staff] is there taking out everything, They'll actually come over and say "Mammy, will you help me to build this or mammy will you help me to do this?"...so it's lovely to get involved...' (TB8p4);

and:

'...when you watch the lady, like, playing with certain toys and seeing how he'd react to certain things...it does make you think...' (TB9p15).

6.3.6.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Parent Role in Toybox'

The PPG3 data collated consistently supports the suggestion that the PPG3 parents undertake an indirect role during their involvement in Toybox. They act to:

- i) Provide Toybox staff with direct access to the children to undertake play stimulation:
- ii) Seek advice and support from Toybox staff to ensure adequate and appropriate service provision for their children.

It is suggested that comparison between these respective differentiations of the PPG3 parent role can be made with those of PPG1 and PPG2 Facilitator and Co-ordinator roles. Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that there is only limited evidence of the effectiveness of the indirect approach adopted by Toybox to support parents to acquire skills of play stimulation as it seeks to meet its aim of developing parental understanding of the social and educational development of their children (McVeigh, 2007).

In relation to the construct of 'Parent as Educator', there is limited PPG3 report of parental recognition of a role for themselves in the education of their children. It is suggested that this is a 'population-specific' issue as a result of direct PPG3 cohort experience of education themselves and a resultant perception of this as a disadvantage.

This finding differs from that for both PPG1 and PPG2 cohorts. PPG1 parents reported limited evidence of recognition of this role and cited concern regarding a lack of relevant skills alongside a number of queries in relation to who should be responsible for this role. Based on these findings it is suggested that the prevailing attitude is one of a lack of interest in this role as a result of a perception of it as an additional responsibility.

Within a 'service-specific' setting, PPG2 parents consistently reported perceiving themselves as educators. Their reports indicate that these parents considered that they tend to adopt the primary educator role with their EY service, Sure Start, perceived as a secondary support rather than primary educator as appears to be the prevailing attitude in PPG1.

The PPG3 cohort presents with a set of 'population-specific' needs which they view as rendering them incapable of acting as an educator. Much of this attitude is dependent on their own experiences of education and the impact of that for them. There is evidence to suggest that their involvement with Toybox and their developing awareness of the role of education in modern life is causing them to re-consider their own educational status.

It is recognised that the reports provided by PPG3 parents may have been impacted by their tendency for limited openness both with those they perceive as ‘other’ as well as those within their own population:

‘Travelling people would not discuss their children with another Traveller person...’
(TB4p14).

6.3.7 Nature of Parent Participation in Toybox

With 'parent participation' a clear policy focus for EY settings, as outlined in Chapter 2, findings discussed to date indicate that parents from PPG1 and PPG2 cohorts experience either non- or tokenistic participation. It was considered important to examine these experiences as reported by PPG3 parents. Their reports have been categorised as 'population-specific' with service provision tailored to address their lack of/limited direct experience of education as directed by EY policy with a clear 'parent participation' focus (CYPSP, 2014; NIE, 2016b).

6.3.7.1 Analysis of Core Category: Nature of Parent Participation in Toybox

There is no evidence of PPG3 parental report of involvement in structured or formal feedback which would act to influence decision-making in relation to service planning and delivery within Toybox. There are single reports of PPG3 parents able to influence decision-making in relation to service delivery on an ad hoc basis:

‘...if there’s something not right, you know, in your own child. So you sit down and say to [TB staff]...and them girls’ll say “well, we’ll find...”, if they don’t know the answers, they’ll find out for you...once you have two people working together you’re sure to get to the problems quicker...’ (TB4p12).

There was also a direct example of this recorded during one of the study's interviews between a PPG3 parent and a Toybox staff member:

TB3: *‘...there’s another one [training course] as well where they should bring the girls up to learn how to use a computer...’*

TB staff: *‘...I should be taking all this in myself...I’m going to link in to see if there is anything, if there’s something I’ll phone you...’* (TB3p10/11).

In spite of these single events, there are no PPG3 reports of being facilitated to contribute to formalised or structured feedback activities, such as those described by both PPG1 and PPG2

cohorts (surveys, Parent Forums or consultation events) in order to contribute to decision-making in relation to service planning and provision.

6.3.7.2 Summary of Analysis of 'Nature of Parent Participation in Toybox'

There are reports of single instances of PPG3 parents influencing decision-making on an ad hoc basis in relation to service provision to them. There is no current evidence of their involvement in structured or formalised feedback activities for the same purpose. As a result it may be concluded that these parents have no influence on the decisions made about the service that they receive. It is further highlighted that there was no PPG3 parent report of wishing to be involved in such decision-making although there is report of parental views about the direction of service development as recorded in Section 6.3.5.1 'Additional comments'.

It could also be suggested that PPG3 parents may have failed to report any such event as a result of either a lack of interest in such events or recognition of them. Data was not obtained from PPG3 parents to identify underlying reasons for this behaviour. Whilst PPG1 and PPG2 parents experienced non- and/or tokenistic participation in relation to the service which they received there is a pattern of apparent non-participation for PPG3 parents.

6.4 Summary of PPG3 findings

This chapter has presented analysis of data collected from PPG3 parents registered with Toybox, Northern Ireland. A number of core themes were used to direct interviews with this cohort based on literature and policy review findings and PPG1 and PPG2 data analysis. The CGT approach is used to validate findings from both PPG1 and PPG2 data and identify 'population-specific' categories. PPG3 findings will now be considered in light of the study's original research objectives and PPG1 and PPG2 findings. This information will be presented in Table 6.9.

Research Objective	Summary of PPG1 findings (universal EY services)	Summary of PPG2 findings (service-specific service)	Summary of PPG3 findings (population-specific service)
1) To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	<p>i) Tokenistic or non-participation consistently experienced;</p> <p>ii) Lack of parental interest in involvement at 'citizen control' level;</p> <p>iii) Reasons for parental lack of interest in 'citizen control': lack of knowledge/awareness of potential for 'citizen control'; lack of skill set to operate at this level; perception of participation at 'citizen control' level as additional responsibility;</p> <p>iv) Inconsistent evidence of maintained involvement facilitates participation at higher level e.g. management board.</p>	<p>i) Tokenistic or non-participation consistently experienced;</p> <p>ii) Limited parental interest in involvement at 'citizen control' level;</p> <p>iii) Greater awareness of RSS infrastructure to support higher level participation by PPG2 parents than PPG1 parents;</p> <p>iii) Reasons for parental lack of interest in 'citizen control': lack of knowledge/awareness of potential for 'citizen control'; lack of skill set to operate at this level; perception of participation at 'citizen control' level as additional responsibility; concern of feedback as complaining;</p> <p>iv) Nil evidence of maintained involvement facilitating participation at higher level e.g. management board.</p>	<p>i) Non-participation experienced.</p> <p>ii) Nil PPG3 report of knowledge of higher level participation structure in Toybox.</p> <p>iii) Nil opportunity to engage in discussion of attitude to higher level of participation in Toybox.</p>
2) To discover the impact of participation on parent involvement activity	<p>i) Inconsistent recognition of need for own involvement in EY service alongside their child;</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of link between participation level and parent involvement activity;</p> <p>iii) Direct, regular and ongoing involvement (regardless of participation level) perceived to have a positive impact with additional benefit also reported.</p>	<p>i) Consistent recognition of need for own involvement in RSS alongside their child;</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of link between participation level and parent involvement activity within RSS setting;</p> <p>iii) Direct, regular and ongoing involvement (regardless of participation level) perceived to have a positive impact with additional benefit also reported within RSS setting.</p>	<p>i) Perception of need for parental presence rather than direct involvement in Toybox.</p> <p>ii) PPG3 reports indicate parental non-participation and limited parental involvement activity - a direct link between these two variables was not noted.</p> <p>iii) Regular and ongoing involvement (regardless of participation level) perceived to have a positive impact.</p>

<p>3) To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services.</p>	<p>i) Two stage process: 'becoming involved' and 'maintaining involvement';</p> <p>ii) 'Becoming involved' driven by: self-motivation as a result of identified need; parental capacity for self-help; personal experience; community level service information provision; professional advice and service access;</p> <p>iii) Limited PPG1 report of interest in EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education for their child(ren);</p> <p>iv) When parental need exceeds standard EY service provision, this need will often be unmet;</p> <p>v) There is a risk of obtaining inaccurate service access information when parents have limited family/social support;</p> <p>vi) 'Maintaining involvement' occurs as a result of: effective communication, made to feel comfortable, sense of commonality and meeting need; and a negative experience of any of these drivers results in parent withdrawal from the service.</p>	<p>i) Two stage process: 'becoming involved' and 'maintaining involvement';</p> <p>ii) 'Becoming involved' driven by: community level Sure Start service knowledge; service access; free service; proximity; flexibility; self-motivation; capacity for self-help; professional help;</p> <p>iii) Limited PPG2 report of interest in EY involvement as a means to gaining preschool education for their child(ren);</p> <p>iv) Nil evidence of parental need exceeding standard RSS service provision;</p> <p>v) Nil evidence of obtaining inaccurate RSS service access information by any PPG2 parents;</p> <p>vi) 'Maintaining involvement' occurs as a result of: effective communication; made to feel comfortable; sense of commonality; meeting need; wider family involvement.</p>	<p>i) 'Population-specific' need for parent involvement as a three stage process: 1. Service evolution within the community; 2. becoming involved and 3. maintaining involvement.</p> <p>ii) Service evolution driven by: National and regional Social Inclusion policy; regional (NI) policy focus on social inclusion of the Travelling community; population-specific preschool service development; cultural norms of the Travelling community; sense of commonality; sense of trust.</p> <p>iii) 'Becoming involved' driven by: Consolidation of parent trust in Toybox staff; Community level Toybox service knowledge; broad community involvement; parental perception of involvement as beneficial; ease of service access.</p> <p>iv) Parental attitude of Toybox involvement as means to supporting child development and school preparedness.</p> <p>v) Nil PPG3 report of perceived need; consistent PPG3 report of retrospective perception of benefit of involvement.</p> <p>vi) Consistent evidence of provision of accurate service access information provision by Toybox staff.</p> <p>vii) 'Maintaining involvement' driven by: Support and advice; home service provision; signposting to other services; facilitation of contact with other services; provision of additional support; development of Service User-Service Provider relationship.</p>
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4) To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role.	<p>i) Broad support for the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator';</p> <p>ii) Limited evidence of parental interest in the 'Parent as Educator' role;</p> <p>iii) Reported concerns about taking in this role: limited skill set; perception of role as additional responsibility</p>	<p>i) Broad support for the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator';</p> <p>ii) Consistent evidence of assumption of 'Parent as Educator' role without ascribing this label to themselves;</p> <p>iii) Limited evidence of parental concern of role as additional responsibility.</p>	<p>i) Nil recognition of role of 'Parent as Educator.'</p> <p>ii) Limited recognition of need for the direct parent involvement in child-Toybox staff interaction.</p>
5) To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services.	<p>i) Parents do perceive a role for themselves within the EY dynamic variously as Facilitator, Skills Acquisitioner or Co-ordinator with varying degrees of direct involvement with the EY service and with the capacity to shift between roles depending on perceived need;</p> <p>ii) There is a consistent lack of evidence to indicate that parents perceive their role either during their child(ren)'s preschool years and/or within the EY dynamic as that of an educator;</p> <p>iii) The perception/or lack of perception of 'parent as educator' is not a driver in parental choice to become involved in EY services.</p>	<p>i) Parents perceive their role within the EY dynamic to be Facilitator, Skills Acquisitioner or Co-ordinator;</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of shifting between roles;</p> <p>iii) Consistent evidence of the automatic assumption of the role as Educator by PPG2 cohort;</p> <p>iv) The perception of 'parent as educator' is not a driver in parental choice to become involved in EY services.</p>	<p>i) Parents perceive their role as either Facilitator of Toybox staff access to child OR Seeker of advice and support.</p> <p>ii) Nil evidence of PPG3 parent perception of their role as that of Educator.</p> <p>iii) Nil evidence of perception of 'parent as educator' as a driver in parental choice to become involved in EY services.</p>

Table 6.9: A Summary of the Findings from PPG3 mapped across to those for PPG1 and PPG2 and the original research objectives

Chapter 7: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Word Count: 10,943

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing EY services in Northern Ireland (NI) and to compare it to current EY 'parent participation' policy including the 'parent as educator' construct (DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b). This is essential in light of the ongoing political promotion of EY education, with parent involvement a vital component, as a key driver in the economic regeneration of NI (NIE, 2016a) and the concurrent lack of any comprehensive evaluation of such involvement in NI (DE, 2012a; Perry, 2016). In this final chapter, a discussion is presented which will draw conclusions from the findings of this study in order to make that comparison. Implications of these findings for relevant policy will be identified and recommendations made in order to ensure effective parent participation as a key sustainable political element of Early Years provision in Northern Ireland. Finally a process, developed from this study, will be introduced for the co-production of a model of effective 'parent participation' in a service context.

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the findings of the study as presented in Table 7.1. This is followed by a discussion of the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Skeat & Perry, 2008; Lawrence & Tar, 2013) as a tool for the generation of emergent theory on participation based on data collected from and driven by PPG cohort reports.

The chapter goes on to examine the issues raised by the findings generated. These will be presented as part of a discussion of the study's original research questions. It will include consideration of the findings of parental experience of tokenistic or non-participation and the associated lack of opportunity to influence service planning and delivery in the context of consistent advocacy of this by EY policy. Parent roles and the link between the pattern of these and current parental experience of participation defined by this study will be considered. Recommendations based on these findings will be presented in relation to service users, providers and policymakers. Finally, the limitations of this study will be discussed alongside consideration of future research possibilities.

7.2 Summary of Study Findings

Table 7.1 presents a brief summary of the original research objectives and study findings:

Original Research Objectives	Method Used	Summary of Study findings
1) To discover the nature of participation experienced by parents accessing Early Years services in Northern Ireland	Inductive generative approach involving the analysis of semi-structured interviews using Constructivist Grounded Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation experienced is tokenistic or non-participation • Consistent report of lack of interest in opportunities for higher level participation • Consistent report of lack of interest due to lack of skill set, perception of this as additional responsibility and lack of knowledge of potential benefit from such involvement • Greater knowledge of EY service structures to facilitate higher level participation within 'service-specific' cohort
2) To discover the impact of participation on parent involvement activity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent report of impact of EY service involvement as positive • Nil evidence of link between level of participation and parent involvement activity • Inconsistent evidence of recognition of need for direct parental involvement
3) To explore and identify the drivers which influence parent involvement in Early Years services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically parent involvement is a two stage process: becoming involved and maintaining involvement (except for targeted services) • Clear link between parental ability to identify need and action self-help skills and the level of service (universal, targeted, specialist) required • Evidence of level of self-identified parental need mapping to service levels (universal, targeted, specialist) (inverse relationship) • Limited evidence of parental interest in EY service involvement in order to obtain a preschool education
4) To ascertain parent perception of the 'Parent as Educator' role		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad support for the theoretical construct of 'Parent as Educator' • Limited evidence of undertaking Educator role • Role perceived as additional responsibility
5) To examine the impact of parent perceptions of their role on their involvement activity in Early Years services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles consistently reported by universal and targeted service users: Facilitator, Co-ordinator, Skills Acquisitioner; moving between roles according to need • Consistent report of lack of direct parent involvement for parents accessing specialist service

This study consisted of two phases: an initial literature and policy review and analysis phase to determine the parameters of the study and a second collection and analysis of data phase. This second phase involved data collection from parents accessing universal, targeted and specialist Early Years services from across the private, public and voluntary sectors in NI. Data collection took the form of 42 single interviews with parent recruits across the three cohorts, of which 30 were analysed. Interview themes were initially shaped by the findings of phase one and revised based on subsequent interview findings in Phase 2.

The two main findings obtained from this study are: i) parents are experiencing non and/or tokenistic rather than 'citizen control participation' across the range of EY services accessed (universal, targeted, specialist) (Arnstein, 1969, p217); and ii) parents identify a range of direct and indirect roles for themselves within Early Years with only a very small proportion describing an 'educator' role although they do report broad support for the theoretical construct. See Table 7.1 for further details.

7.3 Parent Perspective to Theoretical Framework using Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT)

With an interest in the role of parents in a therapeutic dynamic and adopting the perspective that the most effective means of understanding that role would be to examine it from the viewpoint of the parent, based on the belief that parent ideation directly influences parental choice to engage with an activity/event, Phase 1 of this study sought a context in which it would be possible to conduct a comprehensive appraisal of parent involvement in a service provision setting. Early Years education in Northern Ireland (DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b) was identified due to:

- i) the extent of its provision (CP, 2011);
- ii) parental use of it (Perry, 2016; CP, 2017);
- iii) the extensive parent-focussed EY policy and legislation, associated with EY services, underpinning the recommendation of parents as 'participants' in the EY provision to their child with their 'participation' moving them beyond the status of service recipient to that of an active and power-sharing partner with involvement in decision-making about the nature of their respective service (DfE, 2014; HM Government, 2015; NIE, 2016b);

v) an evidence base indicating that EY services are effective in ensuring both short and long term positive outcomes for the individual (Schweinhart et al, 2005; Melhuish et al, 2007; Northrop et al, 2008) and society (Heckman et al, 2010; Perry, 2016); and:

iv) a regional policy focus on Early Years education as a means of promoting the economic growth of NI and tackling its poverty following thirty years of civil and political unrest (NIE, 2011; NIE, 2016a) driven by substantial financial and political support.

Parent involvement in EY services has been identified as essential since it i) ensures the attendance of the child as the EY service's primary recipient; ii) acts as a vehicle for the perpetuation of EY developmental and educational aims for the child (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002) (Bertram & Pascal, 2014) (cited in Perry, 2016); and iii) ensures the reduction in risk of and transition out of poverty (HM Treasury, 1998; Heckman et al, 2010; NIE, 2016a). With the parent identified as key to the success of any EY service, it is suggested that the role of the parent, within this dynamic, has a high commodity value especially in light of the political and financial stakes.

Given these commitments to parent 'participation' in EY services at local, regional and national level, this study's focus on defining the experience of parent involvement in EY services in NI was sharpened by its recognition of a lack of comprehensive assessment of that 'participation' to date (Perry, 2016).

With the context set, the perspective of examination was then considered. Parent 'participation' was to be explored from the perspective of the parent based on their reported experiences. A tool to capture their authentic voices and use them to shape future policy and practice was identified as Constructivist Grounded Theory (Skeat & Perry, 2008; Lawrence & Tar, 2013).

With the perspective that any individual's perception of reality is interpretive, the constructivist form of Grounded Theory allowed for the generation of theory about parent 'participation' by providing a tool for the interpretation of the meaning attributed by any parent to such involvement as well as identifying how such meaning influenced the role undertaken by the parent within the EY dynamic. This tool facilitated a recognition of the

interplay of external social, cultural and historical factors and internal psychological factors to influence individual perception of reality as it identified patterns in the data collected and accommodated varying conditions (Glaser, 1978) (cited in Lawrence & Tar, 2013).

By using CGT, it was possible to identify initial core themes from relevant literature and policy review. These themes were used as the basis for the formulation of areas for discussion with parents during interviews about their 'participation' experiences. CGT, as an analytical tool, allowed for the acknowledgement of similarities and differences across all parent reports and the verification of emerging themes using constant comparison of initial core themes with the emerging data of subsequent parent recruits. The ongoing review and revision of the emerging themes in this way resulted in the abstraction from raw data to theoretical framework.

Constant comparison allowed for the densifying of core themes within each PPG group of recruits and between the three PPG groups recruited resulting in the identification of themes common to all PPG parents, 'service-specific' themes and 'population-specific' themes. In this way data could be collected to further specify initial emerging categories of parental experience of involvement in EY services in NI, define relationships between and across cohort groups, deepen our understanding of the process under investigation and so determine the political sustainability of ongoing support to and funding of EY services in Northern Ireland based on the premise of parent participation as well as generate ideas for the formulation of an implementation process for current models of parent participation.

Recognising that parent participation is an 'interactive phenomenon' (Cobb, 1993, p250) which potentially impacts across all levels of the environment in which the individual operates, including government policy level, it was proposed that an approach, based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theoretical framework, would be employed in order to examine and manage the impact of this study's findings (Snell-Johns et al, 2004).

7.4 Theory of Parent Involvement in Early Years Services in Northern Ireland:

7.4.1 The Framework of 'Parent Involvement in EY service in NI'

Based on the findings of this study, a conceptual framework outlining the process of 'parent involvement in EY services in NI', plus its key components, has been developed and is presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: The Conceptual Framework of 'Parent Involvement in EY service in NI' and its key components

<p><i>Parent Involvement</i> = (<i>Becoming involved</i> + <i>Maintaining involvement</i>) <i>in EY services in NI</i> <i>x Service Evolution/Visibility</i></p>
<p><i>Becoming Involved</i> = <i>Parental Need (self-motivation x self-help skills)</i> + <i>Personal experience (+ professional advice)</i> + <i>Service Access information</i></p>
<p><i>Maintaining Involvement</i> = <i>Feeling comfortable</i> + <i>sense of commonality</i> + <i>effective communication</i> + <i>met need</i></p>

The first section of this framework outlines the three components identified as key in the overall process of parent involvement: 'Becoming Involved', 'Maintaining Involvement' and 'Service Evolution/Visibility'. The first two components comprise the two stages of the process itself. These have been labelled to represent different points in the longitudinal emergence of a relationship between parent and EY service. Each of these points has its own set of drivers and barriers to the continuation of the emergence of this relationship. The stages in the emergence of this relationship will be discussed more fully in the following sections.

The third component of the process of involvement is the evolution or visibility of any EY service in their respective community. EY services which are highly visible, particularly those targeting specific sub-populations e.g. parents of preschool children from the Travelling

community, have been found to ensure that potential service users have awareness and knowledge of that service. This knowledge has been shown to positively impact on their individual ability to both become and maintain their involvement in that service. For EY services not easily visible to prospective service users, there is a risk of parent non-involvement. Whilst visibility influences parental involvement, there is currently no proven relationship between it and participation.

In consideration of this and the other findings reported here, and to minimise the risk of parent non-involvement in EY services with a less defined target audience and potential consequent failure to meet EY service aims, it is suggested that:

- i) accurate and current information regarding the range of EY services available within a specific locale, the nature of any given EY service provision and service-specific access information is provided to prospective service users;
- ii) a range of modalities are used to share this information e.g. social media (Facebook, Twitter), shared public spaces (e.g. library, parish hall), community service information provision sources (e.g. parish/library newsletter), EY, education and service-specific websites;
- iii) training in the provision of current EY service information be provided to those health professionals interfacing with prospective service users e.g. midwives, Health Visitors and GPs.

7.4.2 Becoming Involved

Discussion will now be presented on the first stage of the theoretical framework, 'Becoming Involved', with a focus on its constituent components. First to be discussed is the most powerful of these: 'Parental Need'. This label was devised to act as an umbrella term for the sub-categories of 'self-motivation', its constituent range of identified parent needs, and 'self-help skills' which refers to those activities employed by parents to meet the needs identified. Therefore 'Parental Need' refers to those internal drivers of 'Becoming Involved' resulting from parental ideation that such involvement would address the needs identified.

Self-identified needs reported during interview by PPG recruits include the need for socialisation opportunities for themselves and their children, practical advice and support and childcare. However these reports were not consistent across all cohorts and are largely absent from the PPG3 cohort.

This 'population-specific' cohort (PPG3) is served by the EY service, Toybox, which was set up in response to a need for support for preschool children and their families from the Travelling community. This evolved from the recognition of a gap in educational attainment between children from this community and those from the settled community (McVeigh, 2007) at the exosystem and macrosystem levels. They responded by identifying and implementing a specialist peripatetic service, Toybox, which would aim to enhance 'the social, physical and emotional development' of preschool children from the Travelling community and 'actively promote their enrolment in pre-school settings' (McVeigh, 2007, p6).

Considering this study's finding of a lack of reported 'Parental Need' by the PPG3 cohort, in conjunction with the capacity of the external drivers cited, including 'Professional Advice', to cause the comprehensive engagement of parents for pre-school children from the Travelling community with the Toybox service, it is suggested that with its particular aim of actively promoting pre-school enrolment, Toybox may be at risk of adopting an interventionist approach to the needs of this community (Churchill & Clarke, 2009). It is further suggested that such an approach may result in a failure to recognise the contribution which each parent could potentially make to this process (Gregory, 2000; Malin & Morrow, 2008; MacNeill, 2009). Whilst there is no evidence from the data indicating that PPG3 parents perceive this style of service provision as that of 'power over' (Lehoux et al, 2012), it is suggested that, based on interpretation by the researcher, with the current format of service provision, this remains a high risk.

Such risk requires further consideration in light of the study's findings on the nature of 'participation' experienced by PPG3 parents within the Toybox home visiting dynamic and ideation of their role within that dynamic as well as parental report of satisfaction with the service provision in its current format. These findings and their implications will be discussed in the section 7.5 of this chapter.

Within the context of this current discussion and in order to minimise any potential risk of a 'power over' dynamic within any EY service provision in which parents have not self-identified the need for such a service, it is suggested that:

- i) the understanding by parents of the purpose of involvement in their respective EY service be developed (Malin & Morrow, 2008);
- ii) informal discussion could be used as a format to extend parental ideation of the EY service, its purpose and support parents to begin to express any contribution which they could make within the service provision dynamic;
- iii) EY staff members act to initiate and facilitate this discussion and to seek to engage with parents as partners (Nierse & Abma, 2011) and avoid adopting a cultural deficit model in which staff seek to support parents to address a perceived deficit (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; OFMDFM, 2012b); and:
- iv) these discussions could be facilitated during the EY service activities involving EY staff, parents and the children rather than as a separate event.

By implementing these recommendations it is suggested that this will address a key finding of this study: variable, and occasionally limited, understanding of the purpose of the service. This is considered essential in order to ensure that parents make an informed choice about becoming or maintaining their involvement with the service.

Much of parental ideation regarding the purpose of involvement in EY services can be sourced from their reported range of needs coded under the 'Parental Need' label. A key absentee from this list was 'parental need for pre-school education'. It was referenced by only two of the 42 parents involved in this study.

Instead the data indicates that PPG parents tend to report their ideation of the aim of their child's involvement in EY services as means to avail of activities to develop skills in play and socialisation. This is supported by the finding of only low level interest in preschool education. The findings of this study are supported by those outlined in the recently published *Sure Start Parental Survey 2017* (CP, 2017). By mapping the findings of this study across to

national and regional EY and education policy which promotes EY service standards to 'ensure that children learn...well' (DfE, 2014, p5), it is concluded that a gap exists between policymakers at macrosystem level and individual parent service users at the ontogenetic level in relation to their understanding of the aims and objectives of EY services. This issue becomes particularly significant in light of the macrosystem level-driven expectation that a parent service user will act as a purveyor of EY educational aims for their child (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002; NIE, 2016b).

Persistence with this current situation places the EY service at risk of failing to meet its stated aims and, in the longer term, losing the considerable political and financial support upon which meeting such aims is dependent (NIE, 2016b). It is proposed that there are three options available to manage this situation:

1. The first option is to shape parental ideation about child attendance at EY services to incorporate the concept of involvement as a means to child development with a clearly defined educational component. It is suggested that, as a consequence of parental extension of their ideation on this, there would be a corresponding impact on parental perception of need with a resultant extension of parental ideation on their needs and that of their child to incorporate the need for preschool education.
2. The second option is to consider revising Early Years and education policy at regional and national level to rescind the notion of EY provision as educational and to focus solely on child development (NSCDC, 2008). It is suggested that this would ensure that policy was in line with current parent ideation regarding these services. It is further suggested that this change does not involve a reduction in the focus on parent role within the EY dynamic, rather that a policy focus on the parent role persists but that the nature of that role shifts to take a more developmental approach.
3. The third option is to develop a process to direct the revision of current parent participation models used in EY based on equitable contributions from parents, service providers and policymakers using a co-production approach in order to develop and negotiate shared understanding of the aims and objectives of EY service involvement including 'parent participation'.

The original research questions will be addressed in order to inform the choice of management option in the following sections.

7.4.3 Maintaining Involvement

Consideration will now be given to the second stage of the process of parent involvement identified by this study: 'Maintaining Involvement'. It contains four key components, two internal and two external drivers.

It is concluded that, on the whole, once involved with an EY service individual parents positively experience all or some of the components identified and therefore maintain their involvement. They also formulate positive perceptions about the services themselves including those at risk of experiencing 'power over' relationships with their service. For those parents with specifically defined self-identified needs, a perception of these being met appears to be the most powerful driver for maintaining involvement even when they experience discomfort as a result of a perceived lack of commonality with peer service users. In general, EY services appear to be successfully engaging with parents in a way that makes them feel comfortable and with whom they feel they have something in common:

'...[the EY service setting had a] very sort of collegial atmosphere and a very safe environment...' (S2p13).

It is concluded that there is a greater risk of parental choice not to continue involvement with an EY service during the first rather than the second stage of this process as a consequence of parental perception of 'met need'.

7.5 Consideration of Research Question 1

Having identified the current process and the key components driving PPG parents' involvement with EY services in NI, attention will now be given to the original research questions of this study in order to determine how these experiences match policy-driven recommendations for 'participation' implementation.

In this section we will consider Research Question 1 (RQ1):

How is the paradigm of participation in Early Years settings in Northern Ireland experienced and understood by parents?

7.5.1 Experience of Participation = Involvement, not Participation

Review of the literature and relevant policy and legislation, discussed in earlier chapters, outlines the evolution in government thinking in relation to parents and their role in the preschool period of their child's development. The identification of Early Years services as a means to creating 'pathways out of poverty' (Malin & Morrow, 2008, p96) saw a sharpened focus on partnership working between service providers and parents in order to improve service user social capital (Sure Start Unit, 2003) (cited in Malin & Morrow, 2008). This mirrored a broadening of the concept of 'service user' (DH, 2007) against a backdrop of renewed interest in the philosophical concept of 'participation' (Arnstein, 1969). As a consequence, health, education and social care legislation and policy focussed on evolving the role of parents within the EY context to that of service participant (Arnstein, 1969) with power to shape and influence the nature of the service in which they were involved (NIE, 2016b).

This study's findings indicates that PPG parents experience either non- or tokenistic participation including those nominally described as holding management board positions with their respective EY services. As a consequence, when coding the emerging themes, it was decided that it was necessary to consider the choice of label for the process being described by these parents to reflect the gap identified by this study between policy recommendation and the lived experience of this recommendation.

Recognising the disconnection between parent experience of EY services and Arnstein's definition of participation which is described as a fundamentally 'interactive process' (Cobb, 1993, p250) between the individual and a range of factors compromising life events and dependent on the individual's capacity to do so in order to influence the outcome of that interaction, it was identified that PPG parents were not consistently or effectively able to influence their EY service as an outcome of their involvement. This is in spite of statutory guidance which recommends that 'good quality consultation' be undertaken with service users 'to ensure services are genuinely meeting local need' (DfE, 2010, p7; DfE, 2014) supported by a longer term goal of parents being able '...to influence and shape...children's services...' (DfES, 2007b, p1). This is echoed by Northern Ireland's recently developed *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* which states an intention to 'improve the well-being of

children and young people' in the region by adopting a partnership approach with all relevant stakeholders including parents (NIE, 2016b, p11).

This study has identified a term to reflect the reality of parents lacking power to have such influence, based on its findings: 'involvement'. This term has been employed by policymakers over a prolonged period as they explored the role of parents within the education dynamic: 'We want to encourage more effective involvement of family...in early years...education...' (HM Government, 1997, p53). When employed in this way, it is suggested that the term is used to outline strategies proposed by policymakers at a macrosystem level, where influence from micro-, exo- and macrosystem levels can be difficult to detect, and which therefore risks being described as a 'power over' dynamic (Walker, 2008). The term 'involvement' has, therefore, been chosen as it encapsulates the experience of PPG parents of becoming associated with a service system based on need identified and shaped by broad cultural and political drivers, the impact of which they have had no apparent influence over. In order to specify terminology to the context and findings of this study, the term has been expanded from 'involvement' to 'parent involvement' with a corresponding definition developed based on the findings of this study. Therefore:

Parent Involvement in Early Years services in Northern Ireland is defined as:

Attendance by parent and child at a single EY service event or series of events, which form part of a pre-set EY service management designed programme, as a result of personal choice and/or professional recommendation, culminating in service receipt with no associated decision-making power regarding service provision.

With power the key component of the concept of 'participation', according to Arnstein's definition (1969), this study concludes that, based on current EY service provision format, these parents do not have 'the capacity to produce change' (Miller, 1991) (cited by Walker, 2008, p130) in the fundamental structure, content or 'quality' of the EY service which they are receiving as advocated in a range of current and historical policies including the seminal document *Every Parent Matters* (DfES, 2007b) and most recently in Northern Ireland's *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* (NIE, 2016b).

In consideration of RQ1, we have addressed the parent 'experience' component. We will now go on to consider the second component in the question: parent understanding of the

paradigm of participation. This is considered in order to determine its influence in 'parent involvement' behaviour.

7.5.2 The Paradigm of Participation - how is this understood by parents?

When devising the initial research question for this study, it was considered important to establish how parents understood the concept of 'participation' as this was regarded as a potential driver in parental decision-making to become involved in EY services.

This conceptualisation was shaped by Phase 1 literature and policy review (Malin & Morrow, 2008; MacNeill, 2009) which resulted in the evolution of the sub-themes of 'parental awareness of EY service "participation" structures' and 'knowledge of the "participation" concept' as areas for discussion during PPG interviews.

7.5.2.1 Knowledge of the Concept - awareness of EY service 'participation' structures

The Phase 1 policy review highlighted policy recommendations for consultation activities and structures for all EY services (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014; NIE, 2016b). Variations in the nature of these were noted e.g. PPG parents involved with Sure Start should have knowledge of Parent Forums and/or advisory boards whilst those accessing non-Sure Start EY services should have knowledge of information provision opportunities referred to by EY policymakers as 'partnership-working'. Therefore it was considered useful to determine parental awareness of the existence of these structures and activities as a means to initially exploring parental knowledge of the concept of 'participation'.

Study findings indicate that both PPG1 and PPG3 cohorts lack knowledge of those structures (e.g. Parent Forums, management boards) recommended for the purpose of consultation and partnership working with parents (DfE, 2014). This finding was less definitively replicated for PPG2. Their reports indicated awareness of these structures and a clear, although not consistent, pattern of active decision-making not to attend. Several drivers for this behaviour were also identified with ideation of attendance at such activities reported as an additional stressor, potentially requiring an additional skill set and as an additional responsibility.

Of particular relevance is the finding of no PPG report of attendance at any of these activities based on a perception of benefit to them, their child or their family or as an opportunity to 'produce change' in the structure, content or 'quality' of their EY service (Miller, 1991) (cited

by Walker, 2008, p130). It is suggested, therefore, that, in spite of an awareness of these EY service structures and activities, ideation of their involvement in them is limited to negative perceptions of such activity as an additional pressure.

Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that PPG parental behaviour not to attend activities due to a lack of knowledge of them is defined as passive decision-making. Parental behaviour not to attend based on knowledge or awareness of these activities and a choice not to become involved based on limited negative ideation on the purpose of the activity is defined as active but uninformed decision-making.

Therefore it is concluded that, in spite of the significant amount of policy directing services to facilitate these structures and activities, the profile of persistent non- or tokenistic participation described by this study appears, to be due, partly, to either parental lack of knowledge of EY service 'participation' structures and activities or knowledge of these but limited ideation of their purpose and potential opportunities. This finding is particularly relevant for EY service managers as they consider and interpret attendance figures for any of their 'consultation' events and as they seek to implement the recommendations of the recent *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027* (NIE, 2016b).

In order to address the issue of parental lack of knowledge of structures, it is suggested that:

- i) all NI EY services are scoped to establish whether and in what format 'participation' structures currently exist; and:
- ii) consideration be given to procedures used to inform parents of the existence and the purpose of these structures.

7.5.2.2 Knowledge of the Concept

It was deemed appropriate to seek to establish parental knowledge and understanding of the concept of participation in order to determine whether decisions to become involved in an EY service were based on this knowledge and, as a consequence, a full awareness of the implications and consequences of that choice or not. Therefore the theme of knowledge of the concept of participation was incorporated on an ad hoc basis to the interview schedule.

Analysis of PPG data gathered indicated consistent, though not comprehensive, report of a lack of knowledge of the concept of participation from across all PPG cohorts.

These conclusions support this study's finding of no link between level of PPG parent participation and parent involvement activity, as already discussed, since parents have been shown to attend EY services as a consequence of perceived need rather than any ideation of 'participation' as an opportunity to change the structure, content or quality of that service. This finding also contributes to our understanding of the roles PPG parents identified for themselves, as shown in this study, and included both direct and indirect roles but which could consistently be defined as service recipient roles. 'Participation' was instead described by PPG parents as an additional responsibility potentially requiring a skills set not immediately accessible to them.

It is, therefore, suggested that:

- i) parents would benefit from accessing further information on the concept of participation, including recognition of its potential benefit, to shape their understanding of 'citizen control' participation in order to evolve a more balanced ideation of it;
- ii) EY service staff engage with parents in informal discussion to introduce the concept of 'citizen control' participation;
- iii) EY staff are provided with additional training to support parents in this discussion; and:
- iv) Information on 'parent participation' be provided at the macrosystem level in the format of an advertising campaign to begin to shape broader cultural ideation on the topic.

7.5.2.3 Parent Roles in EY dynamic

Given the identified gap between policy recommendation and parent experience of the way in which they are involved with EY services, it was important to clarify parental ideation in

relation to the roles that they perceived for themselves within the EY context. This is in order to map these perceptions to current policy conceptualisations of parent roles and determine consistency of actual experience versus recommendation.

Prior to 1997, UK government education and child policy adopted a traditional view of preschool children as the responsibility of their parents (Pugh, 2010). Starting with the Labour government's reimagining of Early Years services, and the emergence of Sure Start, parents were encouraged to become 'first educators' (DE, 2012a) of their children at all stages of their academic development as a means to securing their social and human capital (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). This resulted in health, education and social care legislation and policy which currently focuses on evolving the role of parents within the EY context to that of Early Years educator (DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b).

In the absence of any current comprehensive measure of the impact of the policy focus on parent involvement in Early Years (Perry, 2016), this study has found an almost wholesale lack of PPG parent report of any perception of themselves as educators. The evidence provided in this study indicates that parents perceive as positive, the impact of their involvement for both themselves and their children in their respective EY services. The evidence also indicates that parents have varying perceptions regarding the nature of that involvement. A number of parents identify their own direct attendance and involvement in EY services as essential whilst others do not and act only to ensure that their child is in receipt of a service. Therefore there appears to be a gap between policy defined parent role and actual parent experience.

With a strong policy focus on 'Parent as Educator' (DHSSPS, 2009; DE, 2012a; NIE, 2016b), the evidence provided by this study suggests that, whilst there is broad support for the theoretical construct of 'parent as educator', there is inconsistent evidence of parental perception of this as a role they wish to undertake.

The literature repeatedly suggests that service providers have sought to adopt a deficit model approach to designing EY programmes and interventions with a concomitant failure to recognise the skills which parents can potentially contribute to the dynamic (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Clarke, 2006; Malin & Morrow, 2008; MacNeill, 2009), this study suggests that parents tend to adopt a similar deficit approach to their own skill set in relation to supporting

the education of their child: 'I don't know that all parents necessarily have the skills to be their educator...' (S5p29) and '...I'm not an expert in any of those things...' (S6p16).

Alongside a concern about education support skill sets, this study also found that there were also parental concerns regarding the practical implications of taking on such a role: '...there's that whole thing of, right, well, how much can we do? Because we're already very busy and kind of stretched and I don't want to be stretched thin...' (S5p23).

This lukewarm response to the suggestion that parents should act as their child's primary educator could be related to parental conceptualisation of child development in the preschool period as priority rather than education as suggested by this study's findings.

It is concluded that there appears to be a concerted lack of interest by parents in acting as primary educators during the preschool period of their child's development although there is an interest in supporting their development. This supports the findings of Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) and calls into question the validity of education policy focus on parents as educators. With this study's finding of a lack of experience of and interest in 'active participation' in relation to shaping services alongside some variation in reported parental ideation about the function of Early Years services, it is suggested that parents currently experience and have a preference for the 'parent as service recipient' model. It is further suggested that all these parent perceptions contribute to the 'learning culture' of these PPG recruits (Wood, 2008). Given the Northern Ireland Executive's recently stated proposal that 'parents and guardians...accept their role in establishing positive outcomes in the home' (NIE, 2016b, p24), it is suggested, based on the findings of this study, that:

- i) it is necessary for service providers to seek to understand these 'learning cultures';
- ii) service providers should seek to determine parental awareness of the importance of supporting preschool development and learning and to support and develop this awareness by ensuring the visibility of EY services within communities; and:
- iii) service providers provide information and education on child development at micro-, exo- and macrosystem levels in order to shape cultural attitudes and 'learning cultures'.

7.5.2.4 Answering Research Question 1

Based on the discussion presented here, it is concluded that parents experience participation as involvement, or non- and/or tokenistic participation, with no experience of participation which allows them to power-share in the running of their service. Therefore there is a clear gap between parent participation policy recommendations and lived experiences described by the parent cohorts in this study.

Parental understanding of the concept of ‘participation’ appears to be limited to ideation of it as an additional stressor with no positive conceptualisations reported. This finding is reflected in reports of parental ideation of their role within the EY dynamic. Parents do not consistently perceive a role for them to be directly involved within the EY context. There is also inconsistency in the nature of the role parents adopt within this dynamic. This appears to be underpinned by a variation in parental perception of the purpose of EY services. Therefore a gap exists between EY ‘Parent as Educator’ policy recommendation and lived parent experiences.

This study shows that parents have no experience and limited understanding of the paradigm of ‘participation’ within the EY dynamic. Adopting the perspective that parental behaviour is driven by their ideation and conceptualisation of any given activity/event and that that ideation is based on their understanding of the core purpose and underlying philosophy of any activity, it is suggested that developing understanding of the paradigm of participation would address the current implementation gaps identified by this study.

7.6 Consideration of Research Question 2

The following issues have been identified by this study:

- i) The gap between EY ‘parent participation’ policy and parents’ lived experiences;
- ii) The gap between education ‘Parent as Educator’ policy and parents’ lived experiences;
- iii) Limited parental knowledge of the key concepts of ‘parent participation’ and ‘Parent as Educator’; and:

- iv) Limited parental motivation to become involved at ‘citizen control’ and ‘educator’ level.

These will now be considered in relation to the second of the original research questions:

What are the implications of that experience [of participation] for all those involved in this paradigm (child, parent, service provider and policymaker)?

7.6.1 Implications for Parent and Child

In addition to lack of experience of ‘citizen control’ participation and the ‘parent as educator’ role, this study also identified:

- i) persistent report of lack of knowledge of structures and activities to facilitate participation;
- ii) persistent report of lack of knowledge of the concept of participation; and:
- iii) reported negative ideation on ‘citizen control’ participation and ‘parent as educator’ role.

It is, therefore, suggested that these parents are at risk of experiencing passive and/or uninformed decision-making about participation and participation opportunities as a result of a fundamental lack of understanding and awareness of the concept of participation and its potential benefits. This suggestion is reinforced by this study's finding, across all three cohorts, of a pattern of satisfaction with the uni-directional nature of the relationship which they have with service providers from whom they currently are in receipt of a service. This limited ideation of ‘participation’ directly impacts parent conceptualisation of their role within the EY dynamic and appears to contribute to their negative ideation on the ‘parent as educator’ role.

In response to these findings, it is suggested that the absence of ‘citizen control’ participation in this context, that is the ability ‘...to influence and shape...children’s services...’ (DfES, 2007b), impacts on:

- i) the well-being of the individual parent (Eriksson & Granlund, 2004);

- ii) risks the development of ‘shared sustained thinking’ between parents and EY service providers and staff (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002, p12; NIE, 2016b);
- iii) risks the potential for long term positive outcomes for children due to the absence of parent participation (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002; NIE, 2016b);
- iv) risks the evolution of parental ideation on their role within the EY dynamic; and:
- v) risks the political and financial support currently underpinning EY services (Perry, 2016).

7.6.1.1 Recommendations

In order to avoid these risks it is suggested that parents continuing not to recognise participation as a component of the need for involvement with their EY service be prioritised and the issue of lack of knowledge of the concept of participation be addressed:

- i) *This could be achieved through the development of a process model for the co-production of parent participation in Early Years services. It would define the parameters of ‘parent participation in Early Years’ within any given EY service context. This would be based on review of current literature and evidence base by parents, service providers and policymakers and would include key participation texts e.g. Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969) and WHO's International Classification of Functioning (2002);*
- ii) *It would involve consideration of how the following topics would contribute to this definition: concepts of participation, their relevance and applicability to the EY context including ensuring that any participation activities are meaningful for parents;*
- iii) *It would necessitate equitable contributions from parents, service providers and policymakers in order to negotiate a shared conceptualisation of ‘parent participation’ which aims to ensure positive outcomes for child, parent and family;*

- iv) *It would seek to ensure that parental contributions are made from the perspective of parent as an individual and as a parent;*
- v) *This process would be piloted to review its use in the implementation of participation models advocated by current EY policy;*
- vi) *The process model would be revised dependent on pilot study findings; and:*
- vii) *This process model would be employed in any given EY service context.*

7.6.2 Implications for Service Providers

This study indicates that parents experience non-participation and unidirectional power relationships with EY staff. This is a direct contravention of the model of participation advocated by relevant guidance as previously discussed (NIE, 2016b). In spite of this, this study also reported that PPG parents are content with this situation as a result of their perception that this relationship, in its current form, is meeting their need.

The implications of sustaining this situation of parents experiencing tokenistic and/or non-participation is that service providers are at risk of failing to implement ‘participation’ recommendations and EY policy (DfE, 2014; NIE, 2016b) thereby risking the outcomes for both child and parent of involvement with their service and, as a consequence, the underpinning political and financial support to these services.

With this study’s recommendation of the need to facilitate parents to have a functional understanding of participation in order to ensure that they are able to make an active and informed choice to participate in their EY services, it is recognised that there remains an issue of Service Provider perception of the concept of participation and the purpose of it. Literature review indicates that, from a service provider perspective, there is the risk of a fundamental difference in understanding between service users and service providers about the nature of the role of participation and the function of each individual party within that process (MacNeill, 2009). Particularly concerning are reports that ‘this difference seems to reflect their [service providers] wider beliefs about the proper relationship between professional

knowledge and authority and the public's views and wishes, in which the latter are epistemically subordinate to the former' (Martin, 2009, p321).

7.6.2.1 Recommendations

There is a clear need for service providers to ensure that they share their understanding of the nature and purpose of participation with service users. Further it is essential that providers adopt the attitude that whilst each participant will vary in the contribution which they make, by virtue of being individuals, each contribution is valid, that each contributor should be facilitated to contribute equitably and that each received contribution be managed equitably. In order to manage these issues, it is proposed that service providers would participate fully in the co-production process model outlined for the definition of parameters of 'parent participation in Early Years' with consideration given to the nature of their involvement as follows:

- i) *Service providers would facilitate and co-ordinate the initial meeting discussions with parents;*
- ii) *Service providers would ensure that during initial discussions, agreement would be achieved on joint management of further discussions, including the agreement of aims and outcomes, between parents, service providers and policymakers in order to ensure co-production in the implementation of any parent participation model;*
- iii) *Service providers would undertake additional training on the concept of 'participation' as required; and:*
- iv) *Service providers would facilitate and/or provide additional training to parents as required.*

7.6.3 Implications for Policymakers

The findings of this study, in relation to participation, are of particular relevance to those policymakers who currently and historically have called for and recommended the need for parents to be involved in their respective EY service as participants as a means to becoming

more involved in the development of their children and ensuring a more positive long term outcome for them and their children.

In Northern Ireland, its governing body, the Northern Ireland Executive, is responsible for developing region-specific policy relating to EY services. In 2011 the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) was set up with responsibility for improving outcomes for children and young people with a stated intention that:

'children, young people, families and communities will be enabled to participate in the planning process' (CYPSP, 2012, p2).

Most recently the Children's and Young People's Strategy Team has described parents as 'first educators...[who] play a vital role in ensuring healthy outcomes, providing opportunities to play, encouraging learning and acting as advocates for their child's rights' (NIE, 2016b) as well as partners in ensuring the wellbeing of their children in conjunction with statutory and public services (NIE, 2016b).

Northern Ireland has a strong human rights and child rights agenda as a consequence of its history of political and civil unrest. In 2008, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) reviewed the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. In their report they recommended the need to regularly conduct a child rights impact assessment 'to evaluate how the allocation of budget is proportionate to the realization of policy developments' (CRC, 2008, p5). This study's finding of a lack of parental experience of 'participation in the planning process' (CYPSP, 2012, p2) or 'citizen control' participation calls into question the ongoing provision of budgets to EY services which are founded and funded on the expectation of met outcomes particularly in light of CYPSP's stated intention of including children and families in the planning of their own services.

Review of national and regional EY policy has indicated that the terminology used to discuss 'participation' variously includes 'partnership working' (DfES, 2007b), 'parent involvement' (Gray & Francis, 2007), 'parent engagement' (Mendez et al, 2009), 'parent participation' (Avis et al, 2007), 'co-production' (Pemberton & Mason, 2008) and 'empowering of parents' (Malin & Morrow, 2004). It is suggested that this variation in terminology to describe the process

which parents are being encouraged to undertake does little to support either service providers as they seek to implement these policy recommendations or parents as potential participants in a process which they currently have little understanding of. There is a risk that such variation may cause service providers, who have current responsibility for implementing and overseeing 'participation', to interpret policy differently across EY service settings (Martin, 2009). Such risk and potential variation may be contributing to the reported implementation gap identified by this study.

7.6.3.1 Recommendations

In order to begin to manage this issue of lack of participation and associated risk, a number of suggestions have been made:

- i) *Consensus is reached on the issue of terminology variation by agreeing a single term to be used consistently to refer to the process of parents being involved in their EY service and co-producing change in structure, content or quality of that service as required along with service providers, service commissioners and relevant policymakers. It is recommended that this consensus be agreed jointly with service users and service providers as well as policymakers during the co-production process for the implementation of parent participation outlined in Figure 7.1;*
- ii) *the model for the co-production process for the implementation of 'parent participation' outlined below be incorporated into any EY policy which makes reference to the role of parents within that context;*
- iii) *the application of the agreed process across the full range of EY services available through the public, private and voluntary sectors in NI;*
- iv) *the ratification of this framework by the Children and Young People's Strategy Team (NI);*
- v) *The model be implemented and managed by the Childcare Partnerships organisation which acts to provide 'information and support to childcare providers and parents' (www.childcarepartnerships.hscni.net).*

7.6.4 Answering Research Question 2

In conclusion, the findings of this study clearly suggest the need for the development of a process to ensure the effective implementation of participation models. This need is addressed by this study's proposal of a process of co-production, that all involved (parents/service users, service providers and policymakers) contribute equitably to (Pouliot, 2009), in the implementation of current parent participation models. It is further concluded that, based on the discussions presented here, and in light of the model proposed, that option 3 (Section 7.4.2), with its advocacy of a co-production approach, offers the most appropriate means to avoid the risks of EY services failing to meet those outcomes dependent on effective parent participation due to its ineffective implementation. The process proposed is outlined in figure 7.1 and designed based on the findings of this study and its ensuing recommendations.

It is recognised that many of the implementation issues identified in earlier literature, and highlighted in this study, may be due to global economic downturn and the significant impact which this has had on all UK government funded activities including the implementation of parent participation policy within the EY context. It is further recognised that pressures on services persist and that this poses a potential risk to the implementation of this study's proposed framework.

It is further suggested that, as result of the design of this process of co-production, which seeks to recognise the skills and knowledge base of each contributor, strategic use of these resources could act to keep cost to a minimum and reduce the need for expensive training or additional personnel.

It is proposed that the resource most called upon in the use of this proposed framework is time. This issue should be resolved through the effective management of its implementation.

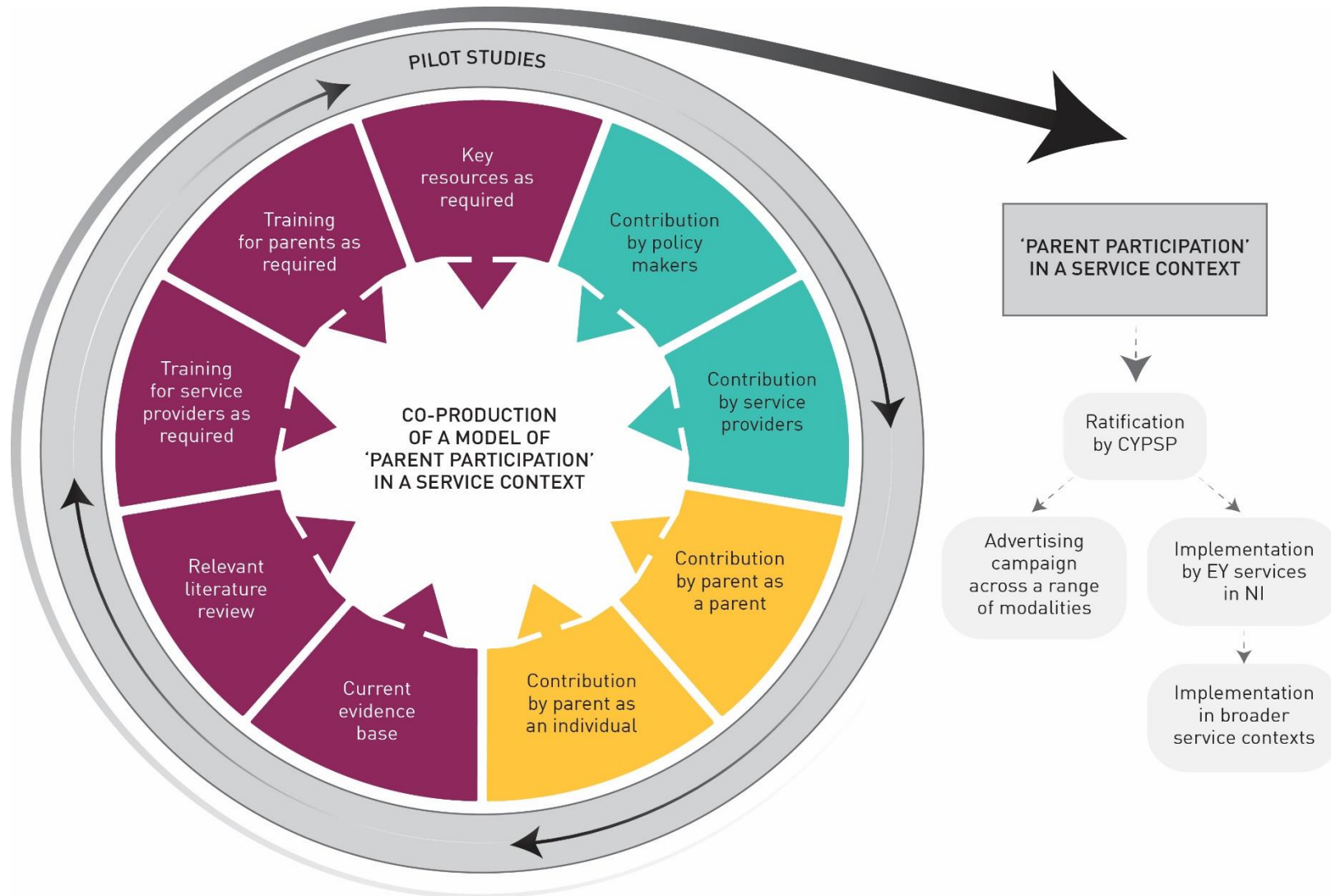


Figure 7.3: Model for the co-production process framework for the implementation of 'Parent Participation' in a service context

7.7 Co-production process framework for the implementation of ‘Parent Participation’

Based on the findings of this study, a framework for the implementation of ‘parent participation’ is proposed. This framework is distinctive from other models examined in the literature review of this study and addresses some of the key participation implementation issues identified by this study, because it incorporates the following features:

- i) It functions only when parents are involved. In this way it overcomes the issue of no or limited parent involvement in consultation activities identified in this study (NIE, 2016b).
- ii) Its structure ensures that discourse of the key concepts, such as ‘participation’ and ‘early years education’, are facilitated. In this way there is an opportunity to share conceptualisations of participation and the purpose of it and to establish consensus across the range of stakeholders. This avoids the issue of lack of shared understanding of key concepts ‘participation’ as identified in earlier literature (Mac Neill, 2009) and analysed further in this current study.
- iii) It facilitates the opportunity to shape ideation relating to key concepts. It is clear from the evidence gathered in this study that parents conceptualise early years provision and education separately. Based on this study’s parents’ reports it appears that, when discussing ‘education’, parents regard this as a formal process involving key activities such as reading and writing. This conceptualisation does not consistently appear to include ‘play-based learning’. This pattern of narrow conceptualisation has also been identified in this study in relation to both ‘parent participation’ and even the lower impact term ‘parent involvement’. It is suggested that with the opportunity for shared discourse ideation may be shaped, and possibly broadened, to develop these conceptualisations amongst all stakeholders. In this way it is suggested that the reluctance voiced by parents in this study, to undertake such activities, may recede as a consequence of revised thinking on these subjects.
- iv) This framework allows for the identification and specification of areas of core knowledge and expertise specific to that key stakeholders.
- v) This framework allows for equitable contributions from all stakeholders. The outcome, of both identification and specification of individual core knowledge and expertise, and the opportunity for equitable contributions by all relevant stakeholders, is that it overcomes the risk of a ‘power-over’ dynamic as

identified in the literature (Lehoux et al, 2012). In this way it avoids the issue of parent presence but active non-engagement as identified in PPG3. With this in mind, it is suggested that, for that particular parent group, parents should be facilitated to be actively involved in Toybox. Whilst the importance of developing relationships of trust, in order to ensure the gradual entry of the Toybox service in to the particular cultural context of the Travelling community is acknowledged, it is suggested that, 15 years on from its introduction, the service is well enough established to facilitate such a change.

- vi) Whilst this framework was evolved based on data gathered from the Early Years education dynamic, it has an inherent flexibility which ensures that it can be applied to a range of service provision contexts including the SLT therapeutic context proposed in the initial conceptualisation of this research study.
- vii) It can be used in any dynamic which involves individuals working together to achieve a common goal therefore it is suggested that it has the potential for ubiquitous use.

As a direct consequence of the framework's inherent flexibility and applicability to any circumstance in which individuals are working together, it is recognised that the stakeholders within any individual group will determine the common outcomes and means to achieving it as advocated by the framework's philosophical underpinning of co-production. In this way, it reflects the ethos of the original Sure Start Local Programmes to determine service provision at local level (Melhuish & Hall, 2007).

7.8 Challenges to the implementation of the Co-production process framework

Given the findings of this study in relation to parental lack of knowledge of and interest in 'participation' opportunities, alongside reported perceptions of additional involvement as additional responsibility and stress, it is recognised that the single biggest challenge to the implementation of this framework is ensuring parental involvement in the first place. This reflects issues identified in the literature (Crozier, 1997) although some studies indicate that parents feel that they are capable of contributing more than is asked of them in their participation activities ((Hanafin & Lynch, 2002). It is suggested that given the consistency of this study's findings in relation to limited parental involvement, that a cultural change is required to increase such involvement.

This study has provided insight, through its identification of key drivers, into the process of ‘becoming involved’. With parental need identified as a key driver of ‘becoming involved’, it is also recognised that such parental need is underpinned by a range of self-awareness and self-help skills which are not shared equitably across the parent population. However, visibility and shared knowledge of a service were also identified, by this study, as key drivers in encouraging parents to become involved. Shared knowledge appears to be most effective in encouraging parents to become involved when received, at local level, from peers and relations. This was demonstrated most effectively in data gathered from PPG3. Key to the acceptance of the Toybox service into the Travelling community was the employment of a member of the Travelling community by Toybox to act as advocate for the service. Therefore it is suggested that the most effective way of managing the challenge of limited parent involvement is to implement a programme of small relevant project management activities, using the co-production process framework, in areas of historically low parent engagement. This would be supported by ensuring that the framework had a specific and visible identity. This identity be emerge from co-production framework (Figure 7.3) which could be employed as a visual logo and used on relevant documentation and signage as appropriate.

In this way it is suggested that by seeking to introduce the framework in a small scale ‘word-of-mouth’ way, knowledge of it will be shared amongst peers at local level. It is anticipated that a sense of ownership will be engendered which will reduce the risk of the framework implementation being perceived as a ‘power over’ activity driven by forces external to the local community therefore risking the repetition of parental non-engagement.

Alongside the issue of parental non-engagement, is the more specific issue of the involvement of fathers in EY services. This study interviewed 42 parents of which only three were fathers. Two fathers were interviewed independently and a third father was interviewed alongside his wife. An interview with one of the fathers interviewed independently was lost due to technical issues. The study also obtained some indirect data from the reports of mothers describing the impact of their involvement on their partners. Due to the sparseness of data, either direct or indirect, from fathers it has not been possible to identify or attribute any father-specific themes in the analysis.

The researcher was aware that within the Travelling community tradition, the role of caregiver is taken by the mother. However, based on the low proportion of fathers recruited

to the study across all PPGs, it is suggested that this reflects a broader issue identified in the literature of mothers continuing to assume the traditional role of caregiving across the whole parent population (Yerkes et al, 2010). The outcome of this pattern of engagement is that mothers appear to engage more with EY services than their partners. It was beyond the scope of this study to research this issue however it appears that this is a cultural issue with activity patterns of engagement/non-engagement by individuals driven by a given set of personal perceptions. It is further suggested that these perceptions could be further shaped using the co-production process framework in Figure 7.3 to influence these engagement patterns.

7.9 Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations of this study. These include:

- i) The protracted timeframe for the completion of this study (7 years). Whilst some of this was beyond the control of the researcher due to the failure of study partners to communicate with and engage in the data collection process, it is recognised the nature of the coding system chosen to analyse the data, manual coding instead of nVivo, was labour intensive and time-consuming. It is proposed that the researcher would undertake in-depth nVivo training in future in order to reduce the data analysis time. Use of nVivo would also ensure that data was stored but accessible for future research and, from which, specific material could be easily retrieved.
- ii) Whilst the study identified a number of key issues and specified further issues previously identified in the literature, it is recognised that it is not possible to determine causality of the issues, e.g the current economic climate and its effect of EY services' ability to implement participation policy, identified with the methodology used here. However, causality was not a key focus of this study. The purpose of this study was to identify parental experience from their perspective and to determine whether issues existed for them before seeking to determine the cause of these possible issues. It is suggested that causality may be investigated in subsequent mixed method or quantitative studies.
- iii) The study has been conducted with a small participant sample size. It is suggested that the consistency of reporting of the themes identified does substantiate its findings. The remit of this study was as a scoping exercise to identify whether issues exist for parents in relation to EY services. Recognising the influence of individual perception on actions and behaviour, it is suggested that this study has

fulfilled its remit and that the verification of findings may be determined by further research.

- iv) The researcher recognises that analysis of this study is limited to her interpretation of the data. Reflecting on her positionality in relation to the research as ‘outside’, the researcher recognised that there were transferable skills from both her professional and educational background which supported her within this role. It is further recognised that, as a result of the protracted time taken to complete this study, the researcher benefitted from this opportunity to develop a robust knowledge of the study context, Early Years, the process under scrutiny, ‘participation’ and the related policy and legislation.
- v) This study was conducted in a single region, Northern Ireland. Given the broad variation in findings from across universal services with PPG1, alongside variation in regionally devolved policy across the UK, it is proposed that similar studies should be conducted with universal services in different regions of the UK in order to specify the findings of this study. It is further suggested that, given the potential for international variation in policy, choice of participation models and their implementation, this study should be conducted in those countries with an EY focus and provision.
- vi) This study has been conducted only from the perspective of parent. Given that participation in the EY context also involves service providers and policymakers, it is proposed that it is necessary to conduct a study to obtain their perspectives. By doing so, it is suggested that an holistic and cohesive overview of the process would be gathered. This would further validate this study’s proposed co-production process model for its future effective implementation of parent participation in the EY context.

7.10 Future Research possibilities

With the completion of this study, a strategy for the dissemination of its findings and the emergent framework has been developed. This has three core actions: publications, presentation at research conferences and further research. This plan is outlined in Table 7.4.

Dissemination Strategy Area	Activity	Specific Action	Action Completed
Research	Pilot studies in other EY settings in NI	Application of the framework with parents attending a language development workshop	Scheduled for Nov 2018
	Studies across the devolved regions in UK (Scotland, Wales, England)	TBC	TBC
	CGT studies with service providers and policymakers at regional, national and international level	TBC	TBC
Presentation	Study findings presentation at international conference	Presentation of study findings at EECERA conference in Hungary	August 2018 Completed
		Presentation of findings at SLT profession (RCSLT) international conference	Sept 2019 TBC
Publication	Writing papers for publication based on study findings	Parent Participation in Universal Early Years Services in Northern Ireland: Identifying the Key Themes	To be submitted in Autumn 2018 to EECERJ
		Parent Participation in Sure Start in Northern Ireland: The Lived Experience of a single service setting	To be submitted to Early Years journal in Autumn 2018
		To draft a paper based on 'population-specific' data	To be completed in Spring 2019
		To draft a paper based on the co-production process framework	To be completed in Spring 2019

Table 7.4: Summary of the research dissemination strategy for this study

7.11 Conclusion

This study has added to our understanding of the parent experience in the EY context through its identification of key issues, including the consistent pattern of non- and tokenistic participation and parental perception of participation activities as additional responsibilities. It contributes to our understanding of these experiences across increasingly targeted service provision and identifies an inverse relationship between level of service provision and degree of involvement of the parent. In summary it contributes the knowledge that, currently, parents are involved, but not participating, in their EY service. As a consequence, this situation ensures that they are not involved in decision-making about EY provision which directly affects them. It is further concluded that, based on the WHO definition of participation, this situation risks impacting negatively on the wellbeing of parent and child (Eriksson & Granlund, 2004) and therefore calls into question the clear political support for the strategy of parent participation.

This study provides knowledge of parents' limited perception of participation opportunities available to them and of the potential outcome of such involvement. This knowledge offers support to earlier literature suggesting a lack of shared knowledge of participation by all stakeholders (MacNeill, 2009). This study goes further by proposing an original strategy for the management of all issues identified: a co-production process framework for the implementation of parent participation.

In conclusion, this study's findings have resulted in the design of a co-production process framework to manage the issues identified. With the framework so clearly rooted in the authentic experiences of parents, it is proposed that its use will ensure positive outcomes for all stakeholders with the opportunity to access it.

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Appendix 1: EY service-specific study information sheets

Parent Participation in Early Years Services in Northern Ireland: Implications for Policy and Practice

Background: This project aims to add new knowledge to the social science sector regarding parents as service users within the arena of Early Intervention services. Early Years education is currently under review by the Northern Ireland Executive with DENI's "Learning to Learn" policy framework with a strong policy and media focus on "Parents as First Educators". Early Years educational settings will provide the context for this study.

Research Questions:

Research questions are as follows:

1. *What is the nature of parent participation within Early Years services across Northern Ireland?*
2. *What are parents' experiences of and attitudes to participation within Early Years (Northern Ireland)?*
3. *What are parents' perceptions of facilitators of and barriers to parent participation within Early Years (Northern Ireland)?*
4. *What are parent's perceptions of their contribution to and gain from participation within Early Years (Northern Ireland)?*
5. *What are parents' perceptions of the impact of their participation on them, their children and families?*

Parental Contribution:

It is hoped, that as a parent with children, currently attending or recently completed involvement in the Early Years setting that, you are able to engage with this study.

Parental Involvement will take the form of a single face-to-face interview lasting 1 to 1.5 hours with the Researcher. The interview will seek to establish parental experience of:

1. How and why you became involved in the Early Years sector
2. How easy or difficult it was to become and to stay involved with the service
3. The nature of your involvement with the service
4. Your perception of the impact of the service on you and your family.

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to establishing the nature of parent participation within Early Years services in Northern Ireland and contribute to the discussion on service provision and development within Early Years services. Your input will contribute directly to these aims.

Appendix 2: Parent Consent form

Consent Form for Participation in Research

I, _____

Of _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

give my written consent to participate in the research project entitled:
Parent Participation in Early Years services in Northern Ireland: Implications for policy and service delivery.

The Researcher, Elaine Duddy, is supervised by Dr Diane Hazlett, School of Communication, University of Ulster (02890 368847) and Dr Jackie Lambe, School of Education, University of Ulster (02870 24276).

I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw consent at any time without penalty.

The purpose of this study is to investigate my experience as a parent with children eligible to attend early years services in Northern Ireland.

The benefit that I may expect from this is the opportunity to participate in a process which could inform how these services are provided and implemented and contribute to service development.

My involvement will consist of a single qualitative face-to-face interview with the researcher, Elaine Duddy. Phone or email contact may be made to discuss any issue relating to my attendance at the interview.

No discomforts or stresses are foreseen. No risks are foreseen. I am aware that a complaints procedure is available to me during this process.

The results of my participation will be confidential and will not be released in any identifiable form without my prior consent unless otherwise required under law.

An audio-recording will be made of the interview. Access to these recordings will be restricted to the researchers directly involved with the research project. The recording will be stored in a secure area (ie password protected folder on researcher's laptop). The recording will be transcribed and my words will be quoted. A number will be ascribed to ensure that I cannot be identified in any way.

The researchers will answer any further questions about this research now or during the course of the project and can be reached by phone at 07791228776 or by email at duddy-e@email.ulster.ac.uk.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the researcher.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Complaints Procedure Information

Complaints Procedure for Participants in Research

1. As a voluntary participant in this research project you are entitled to raise any dissatisfaction you may have regarding how you feel you have been treated during your involvement in this project or the manner in which this project has been conducted.
2. Contact information for the Research team is provided below. Members of this team will attempt to resolve any issues in the first instance. The Chief Investigator (CI) is Dr Diane Hazlett of the School of Communication, University of Ulster who is available at 02890 368847. The Principal Investigator (PI) is Elaine Duddy and is contactable by email at duddy-e@email.ulster.ac.uk.
3. As a participant you may not wish to contact the Research Team directly. It is possible to make a more formal complaint to the University of Ulster Research Ethics Committee by telephone on 02890 366629.
4. The information regarding any complaint which you may wish to make will be treated confidentially and on a need-to-know basis. Please be aware that all phone conversations will be documented, relevant emails will be collated referencing the addressee and the date and time of the email, and verbal information will also be collated. All documentation will be stored in a specified electronic folder with limited access.
5. Frequent updates on the progress of any complaint which you may have will be provided.

Appendix 4: Toybox documentation

Information Sheet

Parent Participation in Early Years Services in Northern Ireland: Implications for Policy and Service Delivery

Background: There is a lot of information, or policy, from both the Northern Ireland Executive and the national government encouraging parents to become involved in their child's preschool education. There is very little information currently available about your role as a parent in the preschool services for your child.

This project aims to explore the following issues:

- Your ideas about your role in your child's preschool education (Toybox)
- What has helped to keep you involved/prevented you from being involved in Toybox
- Your experience of involvement in your child's preschool education (Toybox)
- The impact of your role in your child's preschool education on you and your child.

Parental Contribution to this Project:

It is hoped, that as a parent with children currently attending or recently completed involvement in the Early Years setting that, you are able to take part in this project.

You will take part in one face-to-face interview with Elaine Duddy to discuss the issues listed above.

It is hoped that your involvement will help develop services that meet the needs of all who use them.

Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in Research

I, _____

Of _____

give my written agreement to take part in the research project entitled:

Parent Participation in Early Years services in Northern Ireland: Implications for policy and service delivery.

The Researcher, Elaine Duddy, is supervised by Dr Diane Hazlett, School of Communication, University of Ulster (02890 368847) and Dr Jackie Lambe, School of Education, University of Ulster (02870 24276).

I understand that taking part in this project is entirely my choice and that I can pull out at any time.

This project will explore my experience as a parent attending the Toybox project. The benefit to me is the chance to explain my role in Toybox which could contribute to how services for children under 4 operate in Northern Ireland.

I will have one face-to-face interview with the researcher, Elaine Duddy. Contact will be made with me via my Toybox Project worker to organise the date and time of the interview that suits me.

I will not be put under any stress or risk by taking part in this project. There is a complaints procedure which I can use if needed.

The results of my taking part in this project will be confidential. It will not be possible to identify me from the information that I provide. I will not be identified without giving my permission beforehand unless required under law.

An audio-recording will be made of my interview. Only the researcher (Elaine Duddy) will listen to the recording. The recording will be stored in a secure area (on a password protected folder on the researcher's laptop). The interview will be typed up and my words used. My name will be changed to a number so that I can not be identified.

The researcher will answer any further questions about this research now or during the course of the project and can be reached by phone at 0XXXXX or by email at duddy-e@email.ulster.ac.uk.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the researcher.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Complaints Procedure

Complaints Procedure for Participants in Research

1. If you have any concerns about this project or how you have been involved, you can discuss this with the Research Team.
2. Contact information for the Research team is provided below. Members of this team will attempt to resolve any issues in the first instance. The Chief Investigator (CI) is Dr Diane Hazlett of the School of Communication, University of Ulster who is available at 02890 368847. The Principal Investigator (PI) is Elaine Duddy and is contactable by email at duddy-e@email.ulster.ac.uk.
3. You may not want to contact the Research Team directly. It is possible to make a more formal complaint to the University of Ulster Research Ethics Committee by telephone on 02890 366629.
4. Anything that you report will be treated confidentially. Please be aware that all phone conversations, emails and spoken information about this matter will be collected. All documentation will be stored in a specified electronic folder with limited access.
5. Updates on the progress of any complaint which you may have will be provided regularly.

Appendix 5: Letter of Invitation: RSS parents

Dear Parent,

We are pleased to invite you to participate in the Parent Participation Project.

This project is funded and carried out through the University of Ulster and aims to explore your role as a parent within Rainbow Sure Start. The purpose of this project is to explore how parents are experiencing Early Years services given the current national and regional focus on encouraging you, as a parent, to become involved in your child's preschool education.

It is hoped that by taking part in this project you, as a parent, will have the opportunity to help us understand your role within Rainbow Sure Start. By providing this information it is anticipated that this will help develop Early Years services that meets the needs of all who use them.

Your involvement will consist of a single face-to-face interview with Elaine Duddy to be arranged at a time that is convenient for you. This process will be discussed further with you in due course.

We look forward to meeting with you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Yvonne Tracy
Rainbow Sure Start Project Co-ordinator

Elaine Duddy
Researcher University of Ulster

Appendix 6: Interviews Schedules (original/revised)

Interview Schedule (original):

Introduction

I am interested in your involvement in SS/EY.

1. You attended SS/EY when? And for how long?
2. Did you know anything about this service before you started attending?
3. What had you heard? How had you heard about the service?
4. What was your motivation for becoming involved in the service?
5. What did you hope to gain by becoming involved? (What did you know of this service that encouraged you to become involved?)
6. How did you become involved?

Facilitators/Barriers to Participation

I'm interested in how you became involved.

7. What services did you attend? Why did you choose these services?
8. How did you access these services?
9. Was there anything which helped you accessing this service?
10. Was there anything which hindered you accessing this service?
11. (What kept you coming back?)

Experiences of Early Years Service

Reflecting on the service you received:

12. Can you describe how you were involved, as a parent, in the service you received?
13. What did you see as your role/job in this context/setting?
14. Did you enjoy being involved in this way with the service?
15. Were you aware of different types of involvement? *Volunteering, parent forums, member of the management committee, consultation events*

Parental Participation

16. Did you feel that you were able to make a contribution to the Early Years service? In what way?
17. Was your knowledge or experience sought at any point during your involvement with this service?
18. Can you describe your relationship with those providing this service? Do you feel they understood your service needs?
19. Were you able to give any feedback on the services you attended? Where you asked to suggest any ideas/activities for future courses?
20. Did you want to contribute to or give feedback on the services?
21. Do you feel that parental contribution or participation is important in this setting?
22. Did you feel that there was an interest in you giving this information?

Parental Perception of impact of participation

23. Did your aims for becoming involved in this service change during your involvement? If so, why?
24. Is there a difference between the service you wanted and the service you got?
25. What for you, was the impact of your involvement in this service?
26. Do you feel that your involvement had any impact on your children or family?
27. 'Parents are their children's primary educators' – what do you think this statement means?
28. Do you feel that your involvement in this service supported you to become a primary educator? In what way?

Age bracket

Gender

Income bracket

No of siblings involved in Sure Start

Interview Schedule (revised)

Introduction

I am interested in your involvement

1. Length of involvement
2. Had you heard about... before you attended? What had you heard? How had you heard about...?
3. How did you become involved? What encouraged you to become involved?

Experiences of Early Years service

4. Can you describe your involvement? What ways were you involved?
5. describe your role in this involvement
6. different types of involvement
7. Did you enjoy your involvement?

Facilitators/Barriers to Participation

8. How easy was it to become involved? Did anything help with that?
9. What helped you to be involved?
10. How easy was it to access the service?
11. Did anything help/hinder this?

Parental Contribution to Participation

12. Did you feel that you made a contribution? In what way? Parental knowledge/experience – relationship with service providers
13. Were you able to give any feedback on the services you attended?
14. Contribution / feedback - Did you feel that this was important?

Parental Gain from Early Years setting

15. What has kept you involved?
16. Was there any particular gain for you or your children from your involvement?

Needs and service provision

Parental Perception of impact of participation

17. Did you have any clear aims when you first became involved? Did these change during your involvement?
18. What for you, was the impact of your involvement? Parents as primary educators
19. Do you feel that your involvement had any impact on your children or family?

Appendix 7: PPG1 - sample of interview transcript

Interview with S12 recorded on 16.5.14

I: So you're involved in...it's Holy Cross...

S12: It's Holy Cross Preschool Playgroup.

I: Ok.

S12: Big long title, there's so many others in the area, you see, so...

I: Aw well then...

S12 : I think this is differ, and to a point too, we do have preschool children and we have children that, you know, those children that fall in that July, August...

I: Yes.

S12: I think it's to October they take...

I: Ok.

S12: To the end of October, am, the children that are 4 but aren't ready for school.

I: Right, ok.

S12: So we have a set, so that's why it's preschool playgroup...

I: Ok.

S12: There's two separate sessions so the morning session would be for the preschool children who are paid places and then there's like non-preschoolers who are those children that sorta, that are 4 from the first, the second of July until, I think they take their birthday cut-off as the 13 of October.

I: Ok, ok and about how many are using the service?

S12: We are, we are funded, the social services have us for 20 places.

I: Alright, okeydoke and how long have you been involved?

S12: This will be my third year....

I: Ok and how did you....

S12: When my own daughter, well my other daughter who is 17, she went to the school and then C2 went there so she was there in September 2011, she started and then we were asked, we got a wee letter from the preschool to say would we like to join the committee which, I for my sins thought 'That might be something nice to do, pass an hour'...

I: Ok.

S12: Turned into 60 million hours.

I: Yeah, yeah, so what's your, can you tell me about your involvement at the minute then?

S12: I was taken on, well, the, what (2:00) actually sort of thing, I take it sorta thing the, the playgroup to ask for more committee members was the treasurer and the secretary who were there wanted to, you know, leave because they had been doing it for 30 years...

I: Oh well, they'd kinda earned their stripes.

S12: I think they had, you know...

I: Yes.

S12: I think they had done above and beyond and they were getting on in years and I think that they both felt that they didn't have the time or, you know, the energy to devote to what was expected from now so I was given the treasurer's role...

I: Waaoooh, straight off?

S12: Well it was, it was G who was leaving was the treasurer and, yes go ahead, was the treasurer and M was the secretary so am because I was, it was to be me and S...

I: Mhm.

S12: A girl called S, another mum, we were sorta to take it on, you know, between us but then S had to move on with her husband's job so it was sorta left to myself and, am, so I, for my sins I've been doing the treasurer's role and it was a steep learning curve...

I: Mmm.

S12: It was, it was explained to me 'Och a couple of cheques now and again, you're grand' but it wasn't.

I: Mmm, yeah.

S12: It hasn't turned out to be just that but...

I: Ok.

S12: Because we don't have the committee members that we would like to have we're sorta having to double up jobs.

I: Mhm, mhm.

S12: So I think I'm a Jack of all trades at the minute so..(4:00)

I: Ok, so what, say on weekly basis, what would you be doing as part of that role?

S12: Well the...again it can be, there's can be weeks I would maybe wouldn't have to do, you know, wouldn't be doing anything, there's the weeks, you know, maybe at your quarterly sorta target, you know, your quarterly sorta thing when your bills are coming in and stuff like that there so you would maybe have a wee run on and that, I'd go down at, once a week and I'd get the fees...

I: Mhm.

S12: They're taken to the bank, lodged into the bank...

I: Right.

S12: And then kept, detailed accounts then are just kept...

I: Mhm.

S12: I've been doing the DE funding, I was given, as the sort of, the tre, last year now I was given that and it was the for, you know, the whole funding forms then...

I: Mmm.

S12: For to sort of thing, and it was, it was ok, because I did, I had quite substantial help from the funding people over in Early Years, like, I can't sort of, can't take it away there because I had only to lift the phone and there was somebody there that was willing to help me...

I: Mhm.

S12: And go through it with me because, and poor N XXX, I'm sure my name is engraved in his brain because I seemed to, I seemed to just be never off the phone to the poor man, you know...

I: Mmm.

S12 : And N, I have to say, walked me step by step and stayed with me every step of the way so I could, you know, on that aspect of things I couldn't sort of say I was left high and dry or anything like that there...

I: Mhm.

S12: Yes, it was, you are trying to alleviate because the girls have so much paperwork down in the playgroup and their jobs have significantly changed through paperwork, through...

I: Right.

S12: You know, like social services funding, what they have to complete for social services funding is...

I: Yes, yes, mhm.

S12: Unbelievable and so in a way I'm trying to, I do try to alleviate, (6:00) you know, their job as much as possible to let them get dealing with the children more so than just paperwork, you know...

I: Mhm.

S12: But, and it's, what else would I be doing? There was just a wee run just on staffing, you know, there was a wee bit of, two staff members just seemed to clash for a wee bit there so it was, you know, we have to get this so it was just basically a thing of right, come on, sit down, get this out in the open, get it, talk to each other, apologise, hopefully that's the end of it, you know...

I: Yes, yes.

S12: So I suppose I'm a sounding board too for frustrated staff as well, you know, like that...

I: Ok.

S12: I'm a point of contact where they can go and say 'Well look, I'm not happy with this' or I need support in this, you know, so I think that's...

I: Mhm and currently, you were saying just about doubling up, so currently how many people are on the management committee?

S12: We have, at the minute we have, there's G, am, we do have one of the priests, although, the parish priest, although they haven't been attending our meetings because of other commitments and one thing and another, am, and then there's myself, K, C, G, five, is that...? There is, there is only 5 and...

I: Five.

S12: And G has just come on board so...

I: And ideally how many...?

S12: No, sorry, there's 6, there's another girl called S has just joined, so sorry there's 6, I would say, for the amount, now S is actually going to take on the, I can never remember it, it's like child protection, but it's the designated Child Protection Officer...

I: Oh, safeguarding...

S12: So S is going to do, she said she would, you know, take up that role... (8:00)

I: Mhm.

S12: 'Say C does, but then C do, like C's a solicitor, it's, you know...

I: Mmm.

S12: Her time, you know, is, I'm sure it's quite limited, you know, she's busy enough, you know, we don't tend to like to, you know, maybe bother her too much I suppose...

I: Mmm.

S12: But there are so many like, there are so many wee other like, you maybe would maybe need somebody that, you know, could maybe just deal with forms...

I: Right.

S12: You know, I think there could maybe just be somebody that could just deal with, right, this is a fun, cos the funding forms are so complicated and I, it's not that you sorta go, well I'm not daft, I'm not going to say that I'm stupid, that I don't know how to fill in a form but I think it's all in your wording, I think, form...

I: Yes.

S12: And it's knowing that sort of terminology...

I: Yes.

S12: So I think you need maybe somebody who would be geened up on that sort of thing, you know, would know, you know, I, I would just, yes that's what they're asking and you know that's not what they're asking for obviously, because there's, oh no now the DE funding form last year I think got written about 20 times, you know, it was like, you should have put this in, you should have had, and I'm going right, ok, back to the drawing board, you know...

I: I know, I know.

S12: Because the year previous apparently it wasn't a strong, it wasn't a very strong, you know...

I: Case made.

S12: Case, you know, so I think we just scrapped the barrel.

I: Right.

S12: And...

I: Ok.

S12: I think the help of R XXX...

I: Right, aha.

S12: Sort of you know pushed it for us because, and she was, again, she is, she is one of the, how do you say, I can't remember but she is one of the managerial sort of thing in the Early Years and she did, she was really, really good and she did, she did work really well with us and stuff and then we had M as well and M was really, really good (10:00) with it and M would still maybe keep in, you know, in contact with the girl, she's actually helping with more forms at the minute for, you know, because we need, the place needs to be, Social Services said that we need new toilets and stuff like that.

I: Right, ok.

S12: So M has been trying to, helping applying for funding for, you know, for that and, to maybe get the place, it's 30 years old now and it's...

I: It's, it's in the grounds of the school, is it?

S12: No, no, it's actually just facing...

I: The Fold.

S12: Holyrood, the Fold, it's just the wee, there's the Shamrock and then there's Sure Start and then like there's the, the youth club just set back a bit and it's like, is it blue and red or blue and green or...?

I: Right.

S12: It's just the wee building and then there's the GAA sorta next to that again...

I: Right, ok.

S12: It just stands out on Flax Street and am it was the first preschool in the district...

I: Waaoh.

S12: Because there was only like a bit of a playbus and stuff like that there for a bit and am...

I: Mmm, mmm.

S12: So it was the first sort of real playgroup for the area and it has been, well it's 30 odd years now I think, so it's just beginning to look, shabby, jaded, you know...

I: Yes, yes.

S12: They had a bit if a flood again before I joined, and by the time everything, the building and all was sorted, because they thought they'd have been able to get new, you know, like new tables, so the likes of the wee thing on their wee tables is coming off...

I: Right, right, the trim on it...

S12: So the, they really would need new furniture, you know, it just needs a, you know, just dated...

I: Yes. Yes.

S12: So I, as I said, M had been out with L, hoping, and then we've been in the throes of trying to get estimates for toilets and you'd think, for two children's toilets, and the amount of money, I'm going....

I: Really?

S12: Oh my goodness, talking 5000 upwards (12:00)

I: Mmm.

S12: For 2 baby toilets...

I: It's mad isn't it?

S12: Mental...

I: So you're, you're kind of involved in all that and were saying just about it was the first preschool in the area...

S12: Mhm.

I: And I just, just kind of...

S12: I think we've got lost in translation a wee bit to be quite honest with you because, like they were the first preschool and then they had, then this wee new place opened here, and it's in the boys school and it's, I think it must be BELB, you know, run because they get a dinner, you know...

I: Oh, right.

S12: You know, so people do tend to, oh right, it's an extra half an hour, the playgroup actually used to be only two hours, two and a half hours when my first daughter went, it was

two and half hours and then it was brought up to the four hours to try and compete, I suppose, against this, you know, this...

I: Oh right.

S12: Because then it was just, you know, am, the children bring their own wee lunch...

I: Right.

S12: And they, they have their lunch in the thing and I, I do know that this, the one in the preschool do, are funded for dinners so there is dinners provided and then we have Holy Cross Play and Learn, it's called, and it's in Holy Cross Girls School...

I: Mhm.

S12: So then there's that so, and then there was Sacred Heart had one and it's, I know it's not in this parish but it's, you know, it's back to back, it's just on the Old Park Road there, so there was that, and I'm not sure if Deanby have, Mercy Primary did have like a wee, but it was more like a Mothers and Toddlers group thing that they had....

I: Right.

S12: SO they had, they would have had that, am, but they don't, Mercy Primary don't have it now, (14:00) I think, you know, because all these other ones are, you know, this has been, has just got lost in translation a wee bit...

I: Ok, yeah.

S12: And as I say, you know, it's, paid places, you know, are there and it generates...

I: Mmm.

S12: So then, the afternoon session, then the children, it's paid, you know, the peoples, parents pay for it...

I: Mhm.

S12: And then that, that helps with our wages and stuff like that there, you know, so...

I: So when the, the kind of morning would be...

S12: The morning session would tend to be more the 4 year olds who are ready for school this September, they would be your preschoolers...

I: Yes.

S12: So they do tend to keep that session, unless the parent can't sort of do the, doesn't want the child to go to the morning or whatever...

I: Right.

S12: Or for some reason they can only do the afternoon....

I: Right.

S12: But the afternoon is basically kept for that sort of playgroup sorta children....

I: Mmm.

S12: Maybe, are that sort of 4 but don't start school for another 2 years sort of thing and it would be kept solely for them...

I: Aha.

S12: And then too then the morning session is more sort of structured...

I: Right, ok.

S12: It is more structured in their, in their learning whereas the afternoon is more free play and stuff like that there...

I: Mhm, mhm, and what, with that kind of, I know you were saying with those kind of services that kind of evolved over time around it...

S12: Mhm.

I: But with it being the first here, am, because those things weren't here when we were growing up and obviously there's this new focus on, on Early Years and Early Years education and all that kind of stuff, I wonder what, you know, what having the playgroup in the area did for the area and it's been there for so long, have you any thoughts about that?

(16:00)

S12: Well I would say, looking back on C1 going...

I: C1s' your oldest girl?

S12: C1, she's call, she is, she will be 17 in June so like she would have been, what would, we're talking 14 years ago when she was there...

I: Yes.

S12: And, for me, as a first time mother and...

I: Yes.

S12: And, sorta nobody minded C1 except me or my mum, you know, like my mother-in-law didn't even get C1, you know...

I: Right, she's very precious...

S12: It was me my mum or nobody, or her daddy, you know, it was just, and I sorta felt 'Aw, does she really have to go to school?' Because I was sorta 'Aw she's never going to cope' you know, and the ladies that were there, it was Mrs McX then and Mrs Y and she's still there, and another lady, Mrs O'Z, were there and they were just like three wee mummies, and, you know, I just didn't mind, you know, giving her up to them, but I would say it provided, in the early days, I would say it provided much needed education, like, you know, I mean it's that sort of, where a mother maybe will go 'Oh no, there's nothing wrong, I can understand her speech' I think it's good to have somebody there that goes 'No she needs to

have just a wee bit of help' you know, or, I would think, I would say in the early days it would have been, you know, and provided employment for people, and stuff that wouldn't have been there. There's 4 staff in the morning and 2 in the afternoon and there's actually 2 children this year who are on the autism spectrum...

I: Mhm.

S12: So it did, the girls themselves now am, (18:00) I think through Social Services or whatever were given, the applied and were granted additional funds to provide one to one service for those children, for those two children...

I: Oh, right.

S12: So, am, so we do have the, L, the leader in the morning, because she had already established a rapport with one of the, the child in the morning time, and his mum felt then to bring someone else in at this point, he'd a been, he'd a been coming out in June and probably still wouldn't have, so she was, she wanted L to continue on with, with him because he had really came on leaps and bounds...

I: Aha.

S12: And the wee one in the afternoon then, P the girl in the morning, she went in then and apparently he has take really, the second wee one then has taken really well to, to her, so...

I: Mhm.

S12: So they are, they are very dedicated, I'm not only saying it because I'm working with them and they're very, like they're very hand on with the children and they'll do, they go that extra mile I think...

I: Yes, yes.

S12: To make the experience a pleasant one, you know, am, from, with my own kids, and C1, as I say, would have been quite timid, quite shy, the other one is completely different, cheeky madam, you know, am, but in their own wee ways, you know...

I: Yes.

S12: I suppose, like, they always would have said 'C2's very quiet', mhm, are you sure you have the right child? You know, I do think it's a valuable service to the area, especially to to families that are maybe struggling, I do think it is (20:00)...

I: Mhm.

S12: Even with the others...

I: Mmm.

S12: You know.

I: Mmm, mhm.

S12: I have to say, well I had an experience with them, maybe I shouldn't say that really but with the thing and I didn't get the same type of, what would you say, pastoral care...

I: Pastoral care, yeah?

S12: You know, I don't know, there was just, my niece actually did have speech problems and it was actually Dr A in Couper Street clinic had, cos they weren't going to take her in and, am, she then said 'Right this child needs, she needs to be with children of her own age', first, she was the first grandchild and stuff like that there as well, she needed, and she sort of pushed and she got a place in there...

I: In...

S12: In the, the one in the boys school, the one, well it's sorta in the boys school grounds, it's not like part of the boys school, and she was in there and I just, I just didn't, it wasn't just, it was very, quite clinical I suppose in it's approach...

I: Mhm.

S12: And I just felt obstacles were put, I never got to go from the 9o'clock to 1o'clock, you know, it was just 'Oh no, she needs...', she would have had maybe problems with, maybe still wetting and stuff like that there, so we got that and then it was something else and then it was something else, she needed to be able to and I went down and I said to the teacher, the Head Teacher at the time, and I said 'Look, you're saying that she can't..' I said 'that's, that's lies, I said because she does, she sits at the table with us', 'Oh she doesn't know how to use a knife and fork'...

I: Right, ok.

S12: And I thought 'No, that's lies', I know she does have wee problems and she's a wee bit behind and she's developmentally delayed and stuff like that there I says, but she sits at the table (22:00) with us and uses her, well she wouldn't use a because she's sorta thing but she knows how to use her fork and her spoon and I said that's just sorta, and it wasn't a pleasant experience, and I went when C1 was first, when we were first sorta thing I went down just to ask for an application form and I was told because myself and my husband worked there was no point in taking an application because she wouldn't, she wouldn't get a place so I went 'Right, ok' and I said 'well can you give me an application so I can put it in somewhere else even'...

Both S12 and I laugh.

S12: You know, and am, well that's what I was told, so I, I didn't have a great experience with, you know...

I: SO your niece is older than C1?

S12: She, she was actually just 21 there in March.

I: Right, so that experience pre-dated any, any of your own...

S12: Of my own...

I: SO you went there when you...

S12: I just sort of, automatically...

I: Yes.

S12: It was just, I just went and I sorta, because it was in the bulletin in the chapel saying, you know, if you need, if your child, you know, it's in it every year, you know, if your child's born before the, what is it, the 30th, 1st of July one year and the, you know, thing, what is it?

I: The 31st May of the other...

S12: Something.

I: Sorry June.

S12: Cos our C2 is the 27th of June, she just, she just scrapped, well, she just scrapped it, you know...

I: Yes.

S12: SO she was just 3, just 4 when she would have been going into P, into nursery, into Primary 1 and when she went into primary 1 she was the youngest child in the school, you know...

I: Bless her.

S12: Am, I, you know, I just felt clinical, you know, and in the same way as our primary school too, you know, my husband P, he went to Holy Cross and he said 'Are yo sure Mercy Primary because that was a brilliant wee school, you know' and I'm thinking and I says 'Look, wait til you see (24:00) Mercy Primary' cos I went to Mercy...

I: Aw, right, ok.

S12: You know, and I sorta think, and I was just 'Wait to you see Mercy' and we were going up to Mercy then the following week, and, am, when we went in, they done all their wee bits and pieces and when we came out he just said 'God, you're right', he says 'there's a definite', he says 'Like I thought that school was absolu' but he said 'there is a holy feel here'...

I: Right.

S12: And for me that way, you know...

I: That's important.

S12: The child is the most important, not statistics...

I: Yes.

S12: Not the bank balance, not the, it's the child.

I: Yes.

S12: That is the focus and I get, I just feel that that's what down there, those girls went without wages....

I: Waaoh.

S12: To see, you know, they went without wages for the first month last year.

I: Good lord.

S12: Know and there's not many would do that.

I: No, definitely not.

S12: You know, em, they did get them paid back once the, don't get, once the, you know, once the sorta, but like the place was in, it was in bad financial state when I first took over like, it was two hundred and 71 pounds in the bank...

I: Oh.

S12: You know, and there was...

I: That sounds like my own bank balance.

Both S12 & I laugh.

S12: Like me own, Our C2, her daddy puts a couple of pound in, you know, in...

I: Yes.

S12: Everything and she's started to get, she just got the EMA there, you know, she just scraped it by the skin of her teeth...

I: Aha.

S12: Am, if her daddy had a been getting like £21 more she wouldn't have got it...

I: Oh right.

S12: It was as close as that, you know.

I: Yes.

S12 :And, am, so she just, so she thinks this is great, she gets £30 a week...

I: Yes.

S12: And she said to me I have X amount in the bank and I'm going 'God C1, you've more than I have love.'

Both S12 & I laugh.

I: I know.

S12: Tap.

I: Absolutely.

S12: She's sorta think, going 'You've more than I have darling' but, am, for me, as I say, that is, I (26:00) it is, the child is first and foremost..

I: Mmm.

S12: You know, the thing, the issue and everything else then comes second place, you know, and for me that's a big winner.

I: Mm and you were saying just about it being so homely down there versus other places and what do you think it is about it that creates that atmosphere?

S12: I think it is the staff...

I: Mmm.

S12: You know, K would be, possibly coming retirement age and, as I say, she's been there 30 odd years, like you know, now she's been there from it opened and I just think there is that, it's just a nurturing sort of, you know and, the girls have all came up, you know, from that, it's like a nurturing sort of aspect, you know, they, I just, oh I don't know but I just, I think, I think it is just the staff because they are, they just want to give that sort of, maybe home from home, maybe the child, there was wee one, when C1 was there, and he was just, he was lovely, real lovely child but he just run around every morning, didn't want to go in, you know, and it was just 'Come on ahead' and it was just easy-going, you know and it wasn't that, you know, right no, you have to do, and I know probably most places wouldn't be, you know, they have to, they have to form some sort of structure but I think just it is, it is the staff, you know, they just have that easy-going manner that is needed where children are concerned, it's understanding that they're not afraid to be going in, our C1, as I say too, and even more so with her, she never left my eyes because when she was born, when I first discovered I was expecting her (28:00) my mummy was diagnosed with cancer and then when she born, when she was about 4 weeks then my mummy, it had returned and she needed to go through treatment...

I: Right, ok.

S12: And like she was in the hospital, she was in the Belfast Cancer Centre every morning without fail from she was no size...

I: Right.

S12: Am, and so, to a point, she was never, she was never out of my sight and then she jsut had her first birthday and then mummy died then within the next day and...

I: Aww.

S12: So, I just, she was just my rock like sorta thing, she was my, kept me going, you know...

I: Ah, yeah.

S12: to the point, that's why she's called C1, after Father A up in the chapel, cos he had said, I'd gone up to see him about my mummy, am, about to say she's going in to the hospital to

have her surgery and stuff and he says to me 'There's something else there' and I went 'Oh no, no' he says 'Something else with you' and I went 'No, no, no I'm fine' cos we hadn't told anybody...

I: Right.

S12: Because my blood pressure was really high and we're sorta, it was still touch and go, am, and I said 'No, no, it's fine' and he, sorta thing, and then I says 'Look nobody knows anything' and he says, there's quite a big, and I says 'C2's gonna be 11' and he said 'Right, right' and he says, and I says we just thought it wasn't gonna happen again, just one of those things, he says this has been sent to you for a reason...

I: Aw, yeah.

S12: And I sorta thing, sent to get you through, and do you know I still look at her and I hear him...

I: Yes, yes.

S12: And, do you know, she was just my getting through...

I: Yes.

S12: So, even more so, like, even more so like, she wasn't applied for like until like the second week in September, I sorta went in thinking they'll not have any spaces and they'll not be able to take her...

I: Yes, yes.

S12: And I went in and it was L that I actually (30:00) seen and Linda came in and she was, and, you know, she took her thing and she says 'Look there's two children that were supposed to start and haven't came,'...

I: Mmm.

S12: And she said 'If they don't come', you know, so I sort of, I came out of it thinking 'Och it'll be at least Hallowe'en'...

S12 & I laugh

S12: It'll be at least Hallowe'en, I'll be grand sort o'thing, I have for another few weeks...

I: Yes.

S12: And, am, she rang me, I think that was on the Wednesday, and she rang me on the Friday to say she could start the following Wednesday and I was like 'Oh, no'...

I: Aww.

S12: My baby...

I: Aw.

S12: You know, so, am, and she went in and not a backwards glance...

I: Yes, yeah...

S12: You know I really did think there would have been and she absolutely loved it...

I: Yes, yeah.

S12: And she'll still even come past and she'll go 'Can I not just go in there? Can I not just go in to school in there?' you know?

I: I know.

S12: Not so much this year but last year, you know, she was, you know, 'I would really like to go back in there to go to school'...

I: Oh bless...

S12: You know, she just absolutely loved it.

I: Yeah, yeah.

S12: To a viewpoint, C has like a bit of Southern brogue, she's from Dublin, now C wouldn't have had, but C2, C1 will still 'We're growing some flow-ers'...

I: Oh right.

S12: She has that wee brogue, you know, 'some flow-ers', you know?

I: Yes.

S12: And, am, she, you know, and I'll say to C, and I'll go 'My child's talking with a Southern brogue'...

I laughs

I: So just, in terms of your own involvement, you were saying about having been a Practice Manager, am, and I just wonder what, because it sounds like it has been a huge commitment to take it on....

S12: Och it has been....

I: Yes.

S12: And as I say, but I think, I'm hoping now maybe this year, now the DE funding just, form, it's for renewal and it has came in this, just, there yesterday (32:00) and, eh, I was sorta, I was dreading it coming but seems to be, you know, it doesn't seem, it's not as detailed, I suppose maybe because maybe the previous years, you know, the previous years there wasn't brilliant, it wasn't actually very good or whatever, so it's just like, you know, has your circumstances changed? Well, no, you know, we're still more or less the same, em, and just if there's anything, well like our Reserves policy has changed a wee bit, there's new members on the committee, so that just has to be, you know, whereas now there's sorta, well we have all this on, we have, unless all it has changed, just send us in that, so I imagine it will

start to get a wee bit easier because things are in place that, you know, that weren't, you know, and, as I say, it was a bit of a....

I: Mmm.

S12: A learning curve.

I: Yeah, am, but I just wonder if you had any thoughts about maybe the, what you, what you're bringing to it, in terms maybe, of the skills you have or the, you know...

S12: I don't know, just that, I would probably be a bit organised, you know, well I like to think that I'm organised...*S12 laughs*

I: I'm sure you are.

S12: Am, and I'd like, I know the girls are sorta going 'God I'm so glad, I'm not getting all these phone calls from, you know, going you haven't paid this, you haven't paid that', you know...

I: Yes.

S12: And, just simply there wasn't the, you know, there wasn't the money coming in but we, as I say, we, as I say, we are on that better sort of financial standing due partly to the DE funding...

I: Mmmm.

S12: And we did raise the fees in the afternoon, am, to try and accommodate that too and, am, so I don't know, am bringing, I don't know, I would like to think that I'm bringing relief to the girls, you know, that they're not having to worry about, you know if somebody, if the phone's ringing (34:00) 'Oh my God, is this going to be somebody else looking for money', what am I going to say to them, you know....

I: Yes, yes.

S12: And I would like to think that, yes, the girls can, although the times like, when you're maybe in the middle of a shopping centre you're going 'Oh God, would you just ever go away'...

S12 & I laugh

S12: Am, but I'm like to think that, you know, they can approach and can say 'Well I'm not happy about this' and, you know, there is and, you know, that they're not going to be fobbed off and, you know, we will, if we can, we will try and do something for them.

I: Mhm and just, em, you were saying you'd first heard about it, there was a thing in the newsletter that had come through...

S12: It was just the wee newsletter, you know, 'Welcome to the Play Group' and it was just would you like to join our management, our committee?

I: Mhm.

S12: I thought, to be quite honest when I first sort of went I thought it was to do maybe a wee bit of fundraising...

I & S12 laugh

S12: You know to help out with a wee bit of fundraising, you know, and have a wee bake sale a few times a month or something, you know, like that there, I honestly didn't think that it all, it was, it was ne, like I just thought, well I don't know what I thought like, you know, your kids went to school, they got paid, like I didn't realise that they were like a charity, you know, that, I didn't, you know I thought it was just, it was Belfast Education and Library Board so I didn't realise that, you know, they didn't get funded for their wages and stuff like that there...

I: Mhm.

S12: So there was a lot that I learned then by going on the committee...

I: Yes.

S12: Just exactly what, and I'm sure there's most parents don't realise...

I: No, oh no, probably not, yeah.

S12: You know, I'm sure they're, they don't realise, you know, just what, what is needed and that they're not getting handouts or (36:00) you know, pay, you know, payments to cover costs of everything, you know, they do, they do have to cover their electric, their gas, you know...

I: Mmm.

S12: What was it? We had a big mad water bill, there was outstanding HMRCs, you know, so all that does, they do have to pay all that themselves, you know, that they do have to, you know, fund that all themselves...

I: Yes, I'm just watching your clock...

S12: I know.

I: Just thinking, you need to go, don't you?

S12: I need to...your woman, she's 2o'clock pickup...

I: Right, well, I'll just...

S12: Just at Mercy Primary.

I: Am,, just trying to think, what, what, am, I suppose then maybe to finish up just to ask what you think the impact has been for you and for your girls of being involved in all those different ways with the playgroup?

S12: For myself, it has given me a wee volun, it's given me an interest in a community sort of...

I: Mmm.

S12: You know project, it has given me a sense of working without, you know, sort of that voluntary sort of thing...

I: Mmm.

S12: Without, that it's, it can be on my terms and when I, when I have time to dedicate to it, am, and keep me, you know, it can keep me sane, you know, there's times you can dwell on things that, you know, at time, time of the month, you remember something or an anniversary's coming up or something like that there and it has allowed me, you know, just that wee sense of purpose again, because, you know, I was used, I've worked from I left school...

I: Mmm.

S12: And because, we've, I have a mentally handicapped brother, you see...

I: Mhm.

S12: So, and that was the only thing my mother ever asked, that he never went out of the house, so he lives here, he lives with us, and, am, because of that then, it was because of him then that I really couldn't, (38:00) cos then I sorta thought when C2 goes back, goes to school I could maybe look for something but on that aspect I can't because of the unpredictability of the day centre...

I: Right.

S12: Or you know, if he's sick or like the day centre, touch wood, I'm going to scud myself I'm sure, but, am, it would have been, am, now the other week it was they had no electricity...

I: Right.

S12: So the day centre had to be closed...

I: Ok.

S12: You know, so there's unpredictability there that I wouldn't be to do like a 9 to 5 or a 9 to whatever job so it gives me that sense of purpose...

I: Ok.

S12: On the aspect of my two kids, they came out of it very, happy children and, you know, ready for school.

I: Mmm, mmm.

S12: You know, C1 more so probably, well C2 too, well C2's May, she's a May, as you can see the...

I: Oh yes.

S12: The lanterns are still up, she's just had a birthday there.

I: Excellent.

S12: So the two of them were just so ready for school and just loved the experience like, you know...

I: Yes.

S12: Am, as I say, C1 probably would have been that bit more shy, a bit more reserved than what C2 was but the two of them like, you know, they were ready by the time they came out of Holy Cross Preschool Playgroup, they were ready for school and they had the skills to take them that next step.

I: Mhm. Mhm, and just about other parents getting involved, cos, would, would the committee ultimately like there to be more parents involved or...

S12: I think, well I would like to see more parents, am, even it is on a year about turnaround...

I: Mmm.

S12: I think it just gives parents, just that sense of what exactly is needed for, you know, running it, to keep it up and running, to keep these girls in their jobs, you know...

I: Mmm. (40:00)

S12: And I just don't think that most parents realise that.

I: And would, are people, you know, cos you responded to the ad in the newsletter, are people just not responding to it or do they not...

S12: People aren't responding to it, I think last year it was quite a young, am, mindset and the girls just felt it was like, get rid of them and clear off, you know...

I: Right, ok.

S12: Especially the afternoon kids and stuff like that there but, am, I don't know, I think that's just the, the, the thing of it, it's just, would be perfect if another few parents would come on board, I think, just to, I think just even then, just word of mouth too, and people go 'God I didn't realise that wee', cos I know when I came home to P I was like 'They don't get paid by the Education Board' and he's going 'What? They would' and I'm going 'No they just' you know...

I: Yeah.

S12: That wee five pound that we pay a week is, like, toward, helps pay their wage, you know...

I: Mmm.

S12: We were, like, and I'm sure, I, I probably, you could rest assured that a lot of the parents aren't aware of that...

I: Yeah, yeah.

S12: They probably just think 'Och sure they're, the Belfast Education and Library Board pays that' or whatever, you know...

I: Mmm. Mmm.

S12: So I think on that aspect, if more parents would come on board they would maybe realise that and, like, through their fundraising and all too, you know...

I: Mmm, mhm, and I wonder do parents just not realise or are they not interested or...

S12: I don't know if it's that they're just not interested, if it's the area, if it's because of the, you know, is it an ignorance, is it, I honestly don't know because as I say we both took an active, like P was actually on the board of (42:00) governors when C1 was in Mercy Primary and he was the parent representative for them for four years...

I: Right.

S12: So we, I suppose we did take, you know, we do sort of take an active sort of thing in, in their sort of school lives and, and stuff and you want them to do well, you want them to sort of see every child sort of st, oh I don't know, what's the word, you like to see them getting on...

I: Mmm.

S12: But I, I don't know whether it's just a mindset or...

I: Mmm, mm.

S12: Whether it's that, you know, 'Oh, well she's not doing it, I'm not doing it'...

I: Right.

S12: You know...

I: Is it a confidence thing?

S12: Could be, again I wouldn't be a terribly overly confident, I prefer to sit in the background and blend in...

I: Mmm.

S12: You know, but I, I think, it sort of brings me back to my own school thing, you know, is it, you know, well, when I, when I sort of first went to school, cos that's what I said to C1 when she went into secondary school, I says 'Look, just you think about you, at the end of day it's what you think, what you want to do and you do everything to achieve that'...

I: Mmm.

S12: And I said 'Don't be letting others, not put you down, but don't let others put you off answering' cos I know myself, you know, och first, you know, thing, and then 'Look at her swot, teacher's pet, oh look at you, oh there's your woman again' and it got then that I didn;t, you know, I just, I just sat in the background and...

I: Yes.

S12: And I sorta, I sort of said to C1 'Don't let people like that put you off'. You know...

I: Absolutely.

S12: Don't be sort of thing and if you do see an in, I remember our whole class got detention, and my mummy going up to the nun and going like 'She wasn't involved, why is she...thing?' 'But she didn't try to stop it'.

I: You'd have been brave.

S12: And that's why the whole class, you know, was getting detention, nobody tried to stop it, you know...(44:00)

I: Right.

S12: And I said to C1 'You know, if you don't want to sort of thing, go to a teacher quietly and say look this is happening and I'm not overly happy with it and stuff like that there and she was like, she sorta but she has, she's been absolutely brilliant, she loves, she's in Mercy College there and she absolutely loves it and, am, so she, so I don't if, it it's just like that too, you know, 'Oh well my mate's not doing it, I'm not doing it.'

I: Yes, yeah.

S12: It's that sort of mentality, you know.

I: Absolutely, yeah, yeah.

S12: They'll, they'll laugh at me if I do, I don't know if it is that sort of, cos there's possibly an immaturity there too because they are very young mothers, you know.

I: Right, ok.

S12: There's a sense of immaturity there too, you know...

I: Mmm, mmm, yeah, yeah, it's there are that many things I suppose that could be contributing to it...

S12: Mhm.

I: It's hard to know, I don't want to, I'm just, it's 2...

S12: I know.

I: Will we wrap it up cos I don't want to keep you back, if she's standing at the gates, I'm just thinking, no that's, that's it...

S12: If there's anything else, if you want to go and visit your thing and I should be back her about 20 to 3 because if there is anymore, I get her and then...

TAPE ENDS 45:32 mins

Appendix 8: PPG2 - sample of interview transcript

Interview with DRA 2

Recorded on 29.11.13 DM550038 (Folder E)

I: So it's Rainbow Sure Start you've been involved in...

DRA2: Yes.

I: Ok, and, am, when did you get involved or at what point? Can you tell me about that?

DRA2: Ah, I was involved in the one in Omagh...

I: Right.

DRA2: First of all cos I was living in Omagh and then I moved out here in May so I wanted to join in September...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: Came down and looked about it...

I: And how did you find out about the one in Omagh?

DRA2: It was a Health Visitor that told us about it but then a friend also told us about it...

I: Ok...

DRA2: Cos there facilities was, you can leave the child in for a couple of hours, she says it's great, go and get your shopping done, whatever cos she had a couple of children...

I: Right, so do, is it one little one you have?

DRA2: Yes.

I: Right, ok, and how old?

DRA2: He's 14 months...

I: Right...

DRA2: Nearly 15...

I: So it was your Health Visitor and your friend, which, can you remember which came, which you heard about it from first?

DRA2: Probably the Health Visitor first.

I: Ok...

DRA2 : And then, I suppose I never really looked into anything then...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Cos I thought I didn't really have the time, I thought, but then I asked me friend, she says aw it was great so...

I: Aha, and are you working [DRA name]? Are you back up?

DRA2: Yes (*signs*) I work, doing it full time, and then I'm at college as well so...

I: Waoh...

DRA2: It's a bit hard getting it squeezed in...

I: I'm sure, yeah, ok, so when did you start getting involved in the Omagh Sure Start?

DRA2: Am...trying to think now...

I: What age was your little boy?

DRA2: Must have been about 6 months maybe...

I: Right...

DRA2: So probably around March time...

I: Aha...

DRA2: Cos I was only there for a couple of months before...

I: Before you moved, and what things were you, were you attending there?

DRA2: Ah, there was wee, just parent-toddler groups mainly cos it happened on a Friday and cos I wasn't at work then...

I: Ok.

DRA2: I hadn't started back at work at that stage so I could go to more things...

I: Yes.

DRA2: But mainly the Parent-Toddlers, cos I wanted him to interact more with other children so...

I: Mhm, mhm, so that was, so your motivation for getting involved was, why, why did you decide it would be a good idea?

DRA2: Just, more for the baby, to get him more involved with other children...

I: Yes.

DRA2: Cos all he seen was adults, we've no other children in our house so...

I: Ok.

DRA2: For myself to get out a bit and chat to other mothers and, instead of stuck in the house all day so...

I: Aha, ok, so the, the Mothers and Toddlers group on the Friday, was there anything else that you were?

DRA2: No, not really, just the one on the Friday, just one...

I: So how did that go for you? What did you get from that?

DRA2: Just nice chatting to other mothers...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: And for the wee one to interact, even though he wasn't doing much interacting, he was doing more crawling about but...it was just good to get out of the house and see even other children and how they interact...

I: Aha.

DRA2: And how my child's developing compared to other children...

I: Yes, ok, and am, going back to, to the Health, so it would have been the Health Visitor, what's your little boy's name?

DRA2: C1...

I: C1, so it would have been after C1 was born that you'd heard the Sure Start...

DRA2: Mmm.

I: And she, did she just chat to you about it or did she have a leaflet or anything like that?

DRA2: I can't even remember...

I: I know...

DRA2: It's that long ago...

I: Casting your mind back...

DRA2: Am, I think she might have just said about it...

I: Aha...

DRA2: Yeah, I think she might have just said about it, she says maybe it's good for me to get out to join other groups and that and I think she brought up Sure Start and for me to go and look in if it's in my, what area, there's different catchment areas in Omagh so...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: I think, I don't think I got a leaflet about it...

I: Right, ok and so, how did you then find out about, about things like the catchment area, how did you get all that information?

DRA2: Well, I looked up the Internet...

I: Ok.

DRA2: So then I found, and I just rung the number and then somebody came out to see me...

I: Oh right...

DRA2: From it...

I: Ok, ok...

DRA2: Brought me out, you know, the bag that you get and the wee introduction pack and that so...

I: Yeah, and were there, were, is there a way, d'you think, that could have been easier for you or do you think that was ok or, was there, was that difficult? What did you think about that?

DRA2: No, I found it ok obviously 'cos I had the Internet so I just looked up myself but loads of people who didn't have the Internet and, maybe, should have been more information maybe from the Health Visitor, a leaflet or something...

I: Yeah, yeah, aha...

DRA2: I'm trying to think even if I got a leaflet, sitting saying this but I'm not sure if I did or not...I can't remember...

I: And then finding out about this service, you kinda had to do it again...

DRA2: Yeah, well I always knew Drumquin had one, but I just didn't know the dates and times so, it was a girl who works with Sure Start (05:00) so I Facebooked her to see when it was opening again cos I knew it on holidays during the summer...

I: Ok.

DRA2: So it was her who give me the number...

I: Oh right, ok... and just that, that coming for the first time, for whatever it might be, how was that for you?

DRA2: Well, the one in Drumquin was ok because I know most, some of the mums...

I: Ok.

DRA2: So, it wasn't too daunting...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: The one in Omagh, I didn't know anybody...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: It was just a bit, aw, but everybody was so friendly so, you know, didn't bother me so...

I: Good, excellent, ok, I suppose for some people that could be a real challenge...

DRA2: Yeah...

I: To actually get in the door and, was there anything just about maybe try and find out about the service or anything like that, any ideas that you would have about, about how that ,might be easier or more difficult...

DRA2: Maybe just more advertising cos there's...

I: Right, ok...

DRA2: Cos I knew this was here anyway maybe other mums who don't be in the town as much maybe mightn't know about it you know I do think there's posters up in the doctors and that so....

I: Mhm.

DRA2: So I don't know where you would advertise it, people do find out...

I: Was there much advertising in Omagh?

DRA2: No, not really...

I: No, no, even in the doctors there, no...

DRA2: My doctor was always Drumquin so...

I: Right, ok, ok, but other than that you're not aware...

DRA2: Other than that I have never really seen Sure Start leaflets or posters or that in Omagh...

I: Mmm, and I just wonder as a mum, I'm thinking about what you do daily where it would be useful for that advertising to be...

DRA2: Maybe up around the local shops or something...

I: Mhm, mhm...

DRA2: Cos you're always in and out of the shops...

I: Exactly, exactly, ok, brilliant, okeydokes, so you went to the Mothers and Toddlers and, am, would you say that service was very focussed to the little one or to you or to both, what way...

DRA2: Well kind of a way, you were left to your own devices cos they were kinda looking after the more toddly ones, whereas C1 was younger then so you were kinda in your wee corner and you kinda made your own chitchat and they came and checked on you every so often...

I: Right...

DRA2: You know...

I: Ok, ok, so in terms of say, the job you were doing there, or the role you were doing, would you say it was different to what you might have done in any other, maybe at home with him or...

DRA2: I was probably more focussed on him, me playing with him more, you know, because that's the time you had for play maybe...

I: Ok, ok, right, okeydokes.

DRA2: You know maybe focussed more maybe on play and interaction...

I: and did you talk to the staff about that or was there any...

DRA2: Mmm, not really.

I: Not really, any information about that?

DRA2: No.

I: Ok, okeydokes, right, am, and did you enjoy being involved in that way?

DRA2: Well I enjoyed just, you know, other mothers being there...

I: Ok.

DRA2: And the babies, it wasn't...

I: Mmm.

DRA1: At the same time you go and there mighta been nobody there, nobody there and you're there by yourself and so you felt like there was no point really being there...

I : Ok, ok, so the contact with other mums was really important for you...

DRA2: Mmm.

I: So, and am, just about say things like, that idea of if you were there on your own, you felt that there was no point, or maybe ideas that you would have, do you know what this would work a bit better for me, was that something you felt you could talk to staff about?

DRA2: I never really brought it up...

I: Ok, mhm, mhm...

DRA2: I'd keep everything to myself, I'm not really one to go and complain about anything but...

I: Ok, well, just even ideas...

DRA2: Mhm.

I: Not, not complaining...

DRA2: Mmm.

I: Just, just thinking, d'you know what, what about this..for an...maybe this might work...

DRA2: I never really thought about anything at the time, you know...

I: Yeah, aha, ok, am, and are you aware of anything like Parent Volunteers within Sure Start or the Parent Forum that they have here?

DRA2: Mmm, no.

I: You haven't heard about any of those things? Okeydokes, no this all really useful information...

DRA2: Yip.

I: because it gives us an idea of how well the word's being spread, you know, and I, we think, you know, about anybody, any brilliant idea about how we can spread that word a bit better, you know, feel, feel free...

DRA2: Yeah.

I:Am, so (10:00) in terms of, there's an awful lot of policy coming from government that's saying things like 'Sure Start are here to support parents like you as primary and ongoing educators' so the government very much see your role as a primary and ongoing educator...Have you, have you come across that idea before?

DRA2: No...

I: So is that new to you today?

DRA2: Yes.

I: Ok, and what do you think of that idea?

DRA2: Well it makes sense cos you're spending more time with your child like but...

I: Aha, aha..

DRA2: You do try to educate them best you can XX...

I: Yeah, yeah, and what about the idea of Sure Start supporting you to do that? Do you feel that's there, could it be a bit better or what would work better for you or...

DRA2: I think, this group's only on for one hour on a Tuesday...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: And most of the time I can't either make it so, you know, we only come maybe one weekend out of a month so it's not really benefitting that, you know, we don't really hear about much things apart from that...

I: Mhm, so what would, what would help? What would support you a bit better do you think?

DRA2: Maybe, more time slots or more, well I know the three of them connected, Castlederg, Newtownstewart, but we don't really have the time to get to any of them, I know that sounds bad, know, we try to make the time but I work fulltime, my partner works fulltime so...

I: Mmm, mmm.

DRA2: It's nearly impossible unless I'm off a Tuesday morning and then we'll go...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: And then at that, sometimes I've either been up doing an assignment for college so...

I: Waoh...

DRA2: I've either, I like me sleep instead of coming here, I know that sounds bad but...

I: No, it sounds like you have a lot on, a lot on, what are you studying?

DRA2: Yip, I'm doing the access course to go and do my nursing hopefully in September...

I: Oh, waoh, waoh...

DRA2: Hopefully, it's a lot of work as well, it's me sitting up late at night and then you've got work in the morning so...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: More, I think, I would love to be able to drop Jayden off for a couple of hours, so I could do the housework or something, you know...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Along them lines...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: It's not really a babysitting service but you know what I mean...

I: No, yeah...

DRA2: Something else just til...

I: Aha, aha...and, it, is he, is it a family member who has him or is he at nursery or?

DRA2: Its' a, between family members...

I: Between family members, ok, ok, yeah...

DRA2: Whoever's free more or less...

I: Fair enough, yeah...

DRA2: Cos the times that works out, there's not really many childminders out there that, that's available til 10 o'clock at night, some shifts of mine and then my partner works nights, he works from 5 in the evening until half 1 in the morning so...

I: Right.

DRA2: It's just a bit difficult trying to get somebody...

I: And would he, would there, would he be interested in going to anything here?

DRA2: Aw, he has been a couple of times, you know, to the groups in the mornings 'cos he doesn't start work til 5 but because he doesn't get in til half 1 by the time he does his own wee things he's not getting to bed til 3 in the morning so getting up at 9 o'clock in the morning to get C1 sorted to come here, you know, it's difficult, all round...

I: Challenge, yeah, huge challenge...

DRA2: Mhm, maybe later classes or I don't know...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Or different days cos there's only one set, one day on a Tuesday for the Parent and Toddler...

I: Right, and, and that's here and, am, and I suppose then they're be the travel issue for this in other...

DRA2: Yeah...

I: Yeah? Ok, again that's that's really relevant so, there are no right or wrong answers, I should have said that to you at the start...

DRA2: Oh right.

I: No right or wrong answers, am, and, am, in terms of that, say that information that you've just, 'cos that's a really valid feedback about timing, am, would you have said there was an

opportunity to give that feedback to the service at any point? This is kinda different, this is separate...

DRA2: No, not really...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Like say if there was a wee leaflet came round and asked, you know, time wise or, we were asked but there was nothing really...

I: Mmm, and you think, think maybe something in the post would be the best way or another...?

DRA2: Or even something going around when you come on a Tuesday maybe like...

I: Ok.

DRA2: a wee thing, different times that suit people, you know, 10o'clock in the morning suits most people, maybe if they aren't back at work or that but for people who's working, it's not really ideal unless they've got childminders who comes to the Sure Start with the kids as well...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: But...

I: Mmm, mmm.

DRA2: It's hard to know, but saying, not everybody, well I suppose, there is a lot of people out there who does shift work so it doesn't suit everybody...

I: No, no, yeah, you're right, am, and, do you think it's important to give that kind of feedback? (15:00)

DRA2: Well, probably is cos they aren't going to know otherwise...

I: Yeah, yeah, ok, am, and, just in terms of the service itself and what you're expectations of it were, did you have any expectations of being involved in Sure Start?

DRA2: Not really, no, I kinda knew what was involved when I came...

I: Ok and what you expected and what you got, was that, was that, did you get what you expected or did you expect more or did it...?

DRA2: Aw pretty much, I got what I expected...

I: You got what you expected...Yeah, ok, am, and, am, just in terms, is there anything more you would have liked? Obviously the timing thing could have been better, are there other things that you would have been interested in being involved in?

DRA2: I don't know, cos I think they do have a pretty good programme of different things going on but it's just, as I say, I don't get to these things, so it's the timing for me more so than anything...

I: Mmm, mmm.

DRA2: Cos some of them wee, you know, the cookery classes and that going on...

I: Smell it...

DRA2: I know, but I think it's more that for me...

I: Ok.

DRA2: It's not being able to attend these things...

I: Yeah, ok, yeah, it's, it's very tricky, and just have there been, what has the impact of you being involved in Sure Start, being for, for himself, for the little one, could you...

DRA2: Mmm, don't know, I think it kinda brought him out of himself, as I say, you know, the first 10 minutes he's so shy and then he does interact then and it's really good to see that and, as I say, cos it's just all adults, you know, in our family...

I: Ok.

DRA2: So he doesn't really see many other children...

I: Aha.

DRA2: And even things like, the rest of the babies up walking and stuff, you know, you could see him trying to get up on his feet when we first came here...

I: Mhm...

DRA2: Now, he's toddling about now but...

I: Oh, brilliant...

DRA2: Know, it's good to see that like...

I: Aha, so he's, he's had that interaction...

DRA2: And even sharing, he wouldn't know how to share at home cos he wouldn't, if you asked for something he wouldn't give it to you, whereas here, know, they're sitting giving it back and forth to each other...

I: Mmm...

DRA2: It's great to see that...

I: Mmm, ok, right and anything else that's, that's been beneficial for him?

DRA2: Put me on the spot now, I don't know...

I: Ok, what about for you?

DRA2: Just a different environment instead of being in the house or being at work or, you know, come along and have a chat, as I say, with other ones and...

I: Yes.

DRA2: Cos you know more people here anyway, you're sitting gossiping away anyway, and it's good to see even Jayden interacting with other people....

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Don't see it very much....

I: Mmm, mmm, and I suppose if you're working and you're studying, it's a break...

DRA2: Yes, very much so...

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah I can imagine...

DRA2: A change of scenery...

I: Yeah, yeah, am, and obviously just because you've that much on, even, you know, having the chance to access other stuff is just really really challenging...

DRA2: Very...

I: Yeah.

DRA2: I don't even look up other stuff because, I have it in my mind that I don't have time to do it anyway so...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Really if there probably was something on this morning, I wouldn't have known about it cos I haven't looked at it, you know...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Thinking 'Oh I have to go to Omagh later' so, you know, I don't get time...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: But I don't want C1 to miss out, you know, the same way...

I: Mmm, mmm, right, ok, is there anything else? Just I've kind of gotten through...

DRA2: XX

I: Yeah, is there anything else just about the service or anything at all that you're, that you want to say?

DRA2: No, not really...

I: Ok.

DRA2: The service is good, you know, it is good for what, you know, especially when it's free...

I: Yeah.

DRA2: You know what I mean, you couldn't beat that but...

I: Absolutely.

DRA2: I'll say, it's just the timing of slots for me and that...

I: Yeah, yeah, mhm, yeah....

DRA2: But unless you can do it at 9o'clock at night I don't think it's going to get any better for me...

I: I think everybody'd just be a bit wrecked at that point really, yeah, goodness, including, I think C1'd be asleep...

DRA2: Yes, or about to go to sleep...

I: About to go to sleep, yeah, yeah, I'm trying to think have I covered everything, I'll just quickly check is there anything else I need to ask you about....*checks questionnaire*...just I suppose, obviously you have all these challenges in terms of your time, the only other thing is, but you keep coming back and I just wonder, you know, with all those huge pressures on you, what, what makes you think, d'you know what I will keep going back?

DRA2: As I say, it's just to get C1 out...

I: Mmm.

DRA2: Cos he's, well not stuck in the house all the time like, but you know, it's to get him out more so, not even a break for myself, I think but it's more so for him...

I: Yeah, ok, yeah, okeydokes.

DRA2: He sees me sitting on the laptop probably all day over, oh like, no like I do try to get him out as much as I can even if it's not Sure Start, my days off is with him but just it's hard, know, if there was something on the days I was off, it would be good but most of the time it's not really...

I: And how are you getting the information about what is and isn't on?

DRA2: Well, we got a leaflet...

I: Mhm.

DRA2: from Sure Start when we first started...

I: Right...

DRA2: It's still in the house...

I: Yeah, and are you getting, are there any other updates that come through about anything else?

DRA2: Well I haven't received anything...

I: A newsletter or...

DRA2: Actually I got a Christmas thing through the post the other day...

I: OK...

DRA2: it was the only thing, but no, I haven't received any newsletters or anything yet...

I: Ok, ok...

DRA2: But I only started in September...

I: Just registered, ok, yeah, so that could be a way of, of kind of on a week to week basis...

DRA2: Yeap...

I: Oh I'm off today, I'll maybe, maybe see what's happening in Sure Start...

DRA2: Yeah...

I: Okeydokes, I'm trying to think is there, yeah, that's pretty much everything, I'll switch these off...

INTERVIEW ENDS (22:01)

Appendix 9: PPG3 - sample of interview transcript

Toybox 6 (recorded on 17.1.14)

Transcribed on 15.4.16

Toybox staff (TBS) working with children in room resulting in high volume which impacted on clarity of recording

I: So [TB6] can you, I don't know very much about Toybox, can you tell me a bit, just a bit about the service?

Lots of background noise from children

TB6: Well, they come out to the house about once a week...

I: Aha...

TB6: And just really it gives you a bit of a break to yourself as well cos the kids are just sitting, sitting in front of the X...

I: Ok...

TB6: And I find it's sorta getting them ready for school X...

I: Ok...

TB6: Yeah I find it's getting them ready for that so...

I: Right, ok...

TB6: Cos nursery's all toys, mostly as well like so yeah...

I: Ok and how did you find out about Toybox?

TB6: The Traveller support...

I: Right....

TB6: They got me, they got them like registered with it, so they came out...

I: Right, right, and did you or were any of your friends using it, had you heard about it any other way?

TB6: No, I heard any other way...

I: Just through the Traveller support, ok and did someone go through forms with you in terms of getting involved?

TB6: No, the Traveller support bring out the, last woman that was here [TB staff member]?

I: Right.

TB6: She came out on that day...

I: Right.

TB6: And she had forms and stuff with her...

I: So she just went through them there and then...

TB6: Mmm.

I: Right and so how where you involved with for, do you know?

TB6: Just over three years now, he was only about a week now...

I: Oh so from when he was very young...

TB6: Yeah...

I: And what ages are the kids now?

TB6: 5 and 3...

I: 5 and 3, so is [C2] still involved in Toybox?

TB6: Yeah...

I: Yeah, with...

Children start signing Old MacDonald...

I: It's suddenly gone very quiet...

Some interaction with children

I: So [TB worker]'s working directly with [C2], but can you explain to me for your point of view, what's been helpful or what's been useful about Toybox for you?

TB6: Am, with him like or...

I: Either, which ever...

TB6: He's learning to share more, cos he's very jealous, he can share more with toys and playing more with them...

I: Aha...

TB6: So...

I: That's been...

TB6: And it's helpful thing like that as well so...

I: Ok, anything else?

TB6: He's communicating, he's communicating a lot...

I: right...

TB6: His communicating a lot more so...

I: Aha, aha and obviously, as I say [TB worker]'s working directly with [C2], is there anything for you, any benefits for you of Toybox...?

TB6: well they get to, like register with other groups, if you wanted to go to any groups and they're very helpful with forms and stuff...

I: Aha.

TB6: Get forms filled in so...

I: So what other kind of groups have you got involved with through this?

TB6: Sure Start....

I: Very good...

TB6: Sure Start so...

I: The Two Year programme?

TB6: Yeah.

I: Yeah and is [C2] involved in it too?

TB6: No, he's on the waiting list but he didn't get a place at the time so...

I: Ok...

TB6: But he's getting a place in nursery now so, September so...

I: So that, it's kinda moving on...

TB6: Yeah...

I: To something else, right, and obviously you've, you've had the experience of moving from kind of preschool up into school, was that a big change did you find?

TB6: No.

I: No, ok...

TB6: It's just communicated very well like straight away...

I: Aha, and [TB6] the services coming in to home for you, was that important?

TB6: That was important, yeah, because don't I think, if it was anywhere else, I wouldn't be able to get out for it...

I: Right ok...

TB6: So....

I: So the idea of going out to services, is not...

TB6: No, there's too much for to do...

I: Right, ok, so just busy...

TB6: Yeah.

I: Okeydokes and obviously they go to school so they have to go out for that...

TB6: He doesn't go to school, she goes to...

I: No, I know that, would the change, with that step-up would you notice the difference between the service you received in Toybox and the service you received in school?

TB6: Yeah...

I: What would the difference be?

TB6: What do you mean? Between school and at home?

I: Yeah.

TB6: Because with her being in P1 now it's mostly learning with the reading and writing and she still has her playtime and X inside time as well so... (05:00)

I: *Ok, you doing some colouring in? Oh, I've spoken, I've interrupted...are you? Oh very good (chatting to [C2]), is the crayon in there...* and obviously the idea of the service coming in, we were saying it's giving you some time, there's am, I'm just wondering about, TBS's coming in with her knowledge and skills around kinda play and you have knowledge and skills about the children, is there an opportunity to kind of share those skills with, you know, learning about the play and then you contributing your knowledge, or giving your knowledge about the children?

TB6: Yeah...

I: Yeah...

TB6: I don't know so...they'd be very X sitting down playing and she asks, know, questions about everything, she knows, where did you get this or what did you do with that...

I: Mmm...

TB6 : And stuff like that so...

I: Mmm, and what about you? Are you, do you think there's an opportunity for you to get involved?

TB6: Yeah..

I: Yeah...

TB6: Yeah...

I: Can you tell me a bit about that?

TB6: cos when the, sitting down he, they can come up and ask you for to join in their, they can show you their jigsaws or their drawings or their paintings or whatever...

I: Aha, aha...

TB6: Want you to get involved in it...

I: Aha, and is that something you would have thought very much about before you got involved with Toybox...

TB6: Yeah...

I: Yeah, ok, okeydokes, *Scrappy's getting involved in the act...*

TB6: *go to the toilet quick...*

TB6 and Toybox worker send child off to toilet

I: And there is anything that you had hoped to get, and is what you're getting from Toybox what you wanted to get from Toybox?

TB6: Yeah...

I: Yeah, so no ideas about what you might change?

TB6: I wouldn't change anything about it...

I: Right

TB6: No I wouldn't change anything...

I: Aha...

TB6: Cos...

Children start getting upset...

I: I've kind asked everything I wanted to about Toybox, is there anything you wanted to say about it or...

TB6: No just that it is a very good, it's very helpful like and so...

I: SO you were saying about helping you to fill out forms and maybe getting access to other groups...

TB6: Yeah...

I: Anything else? Any other ways it's helpful?

TB6: So to give you a bit of time to yourself like for a hour as well, like, each week you get your own things done round the house, like they are very helpful like that now with the kids here...

Child becomes upset again

I: Nothing's going well...

TB6: No...

Children continue playing

INTERVIEW ENDS AT 08:43MINS

Appendix 10: Sample of Initial Coding

Variation in Service Provision

S9 (p1) - child getting a 2YOP because of stammer
vs. S3 who's children were autistic
no service access issues + overall very positive
ideation of service (P11-13)

(S9, p15) - attending courses/progress as a result
of a sense of obligation - same as S1 -
due to +ve ideation about service (S9, p20)
(S9, p15) - Parents felt they had no role + P53
stay-at-home - 'we didn't get a whole lot out
of that...' (S9F, p15)

(S9F, p17) - Ideation of potential for participation

(S9M, p19) - parent volunteer - aware of ACP app
but 'were not really big joiners' (S9F, p22)

* 'It's free of charge...' (S9M, p24)

* 'we don't know what they were looking for
out of it.' (S9F, p26)

* (S9F, p26) - issue of older parents mixing
w/ younger parents (S6, p52)

* (S9F, p30) - Parents as Educators - 'to push
it back on families to say 'Right, you're responsible
for your child' - (S5) - similar to

* 'good point about learning' the stuff in a
structured way...' (S9M, p31)

* Reduced communication opportunities from
S/S → Nursery → school (S9M, p36)

* '... you're looking at that you're not giving them
the opportunity...' (S9M, p38) '... a lot of other people...

S10

(S10p1) - not living in catchment area but was able to access service. ∴ huge variation in application of access criteria

(S10p4) - service access facilitated by direct face to - face contact - self-help behaviours (+ PD)

(S10p6) - Mum's parents don't know about EY services → link 2 post-natal depression → link to (S2)

(S10p6) - (S6) has a v. different attitude to getting involved in EY services to (S9M+F)
- compare!

(S10p8) - Information sharing amongst network

(S10p9) - SV as expert - giving advice/suggestions

(S10p10) - M is happy to receive info & advice

(S10p12/13) - difficulty maintaining communication
2 S/S once direct contact through prog attendance ceased - indirect contact e.g. newsletter - poor

(S10p14) - AEP - doesn't feel she knows enough to contribute at service development level

(S10p15) - attending EY service as indicated wanting best for child

(S10p17) - same attitude to feedback as (S1)

Appendix 11: Sample of Memo record

DRA1 – Memoing 26.2.16 (PPG2)

DRA2 Memoing 7.3.16 (compare with PPG1 & DRA1

CRA1 12.3.16 (compare with PPG1 & DRA1 & DRA2)

CRA2 13.3.16 (compare with PPG1 & DRA1/DRA2/CRA1)

NRA1 18.3.16 (compare with PPG1 & DRA1/DRA2/CRA1/CRA2)

DRI1 9.4.16 (compare with Registered Active Interviews & PPG1)

Similarities to PPG1

PPG1 X.2: Service access – Driver 6: Impact of being a working mum Difficulty accessing service as a working mum (p1) & (p7) – not able to attend services during the week due to work hours but would come to anything on a Sat DRA2: ‘I hadn’t started back at work at that stage so I could go to more things...’ (p2) & ‘...but we don’t have the time to get to any of them, I know that sounds bad...we try to make the time but I work fulltime, my partner works fulltime, it’s nearly impossible unless I’m off a Tuesday morning and then we’ll go...and then sometimes I’ve either been up doing an assignment for college so I’ve either, I like me sleep instead of coming here ...’ (p8) & ‘I don’t even look up other stuff because I have it in my mind that I don’t have time to do it anyway...but I don’t want [C1] to miss out, the same way...’ (p13) & NRA1: soon returning to work – part-time to begin with and then fulltime: ‘...I hope to...still attend the breastfeeding if I can...and if there’s other things are on on my days off...’ (p4)

PPG1 X.4 Impact: child enjoyment (p21) & socialisation ‘she does love getting out and seeing different people...’ (p21/22) & DRA2: ‘I think it kinda brought him out of himself...for the first 10 minutes he’s so shy and then he does interact then and it’s really good to see that and, as I say, cos it’s just all adults, you know, in our family so he doesn’t really see many other children...and even things like the rest of the babies up walking and stuff...you could see him trying to get up on his feet when we first came here...and even sharing, he wouldn’t know how to share at home...whereas here, they’re sitting giving it back and forth to each other...’ (p11/12) & (of TYOP) CRA1: ‘...just that she got out, she was at a good age that she wanted to play with other children and like she seemed to just love it, it brought her on a while lot I thought...mixing and, like, she’s a brilliant mixer now, she would chat to anybody...’ (p2/3) & CRA1 (p12) & ‘...it was like no bother to her at all [going to school] because she was in the TYOP...there was never no days she was going in crying...she was wile to go to school and probably because she’s been doing it from an early age...’ (p13) &

NRA1: ‘...[C1] learning to interact a bit more...I don’t want her being too clingy to me...gain her confidence with other kids...as she grows up to learn to share...’ (p18) & ‘...there’s a real confidence about her [C1]...’ (p20)

PPG1 X.4 Impact: same – getting out of house and chatting to other mums (socialisation) + ‘getting out of the house’ (p15) & evidence of wanting to maintain involvement (p5): ‘the next newsletter comes out I’ll be looking to see...’ (p5) & ‘if there was ever a second baby, I would definitely go again’ (p6) & easier labour (p8) & DRA2: ‘just a different environment instead of being in the house...’ (p12) & CRA1: ‘...when you get out and meet other ones it kinda brings you out of yourself as well...’ (p4) – increased confidence: ‘...I just think maybe with two of them you kinda, then you do come out of yourself more or something...’ (p6) & CRA1 (p12) CRA2: ‘...it benefits them but it benefits me as well, getting out, meeting other people that I never would have really met...’ (p5) & ‘...it’s impacted on me very positively...just getting out and doing things...’ (p10)

PPG1 X.4 Impact: on wider family: CRA1: ‘...the infant massage, even when she was staying with the granny...the wee oil was there and I was like..just try and maybe a few wee...it’s not hard to show them...’ (p12)

PPG1 X.4 Impact: Skill acquisition – learning how to use/do baby massage + advice on communication: ‘they encourage you to talk to the baby while you are doing it...’ (p13) – this is mentioned by PPG1 parents but I don’t clearly draw it out – more specificity of what they actually learn in PPG2 (?) e.g. massage to help with bowel movement + provision of information booklet covering what was taught in class (p14) + examples of application of acquired skills at home (p14) + encouraging ‘touch’ (p14) + ‘colicky baby...you felt like you had these tools...to try and settle her...’ (p14) + ‘...it’s not medication...it’s sorta all natural...I’ve learned it for her...’ (p15) + ‘if I didn’t come here and do that...I’d a been singing the songs and maybe not doing the movements...’ (p25) & DRA2: ‘...it’s different my sister saying it [giving advice about techniques] to me and actually going and being told it from somebody that knows about it...’ (p11) & NRA1: ‘...I went to the weaning class and the dietitian was all...the likes of petit filous and all those are full of sugar...and I had no clue...’ (p9) & ‘...I probably got more confident as a parent...’ (p16)

PPG1 X.2 – Driver 1: socialisation – C1 really enjoyed infant massage & DRA1 really enjoyed meeting mums & seeing other babies development – information sourcing from other SUs as well as SP (p3) & (p12) ‘we were sitting at home all day and it was just an excuse to get out and see somebody...’ + ‘...I woulda been happier because...you got out that day...and she’d a sensed that as well...’ (p22) & socialisation for child: ‘...I wanted him to interact more

with other children...all he seen was adults, we've no other children in our house...' (DRA2 p2) & CRA1 (p1) & parent: '...for myself to get out a bit and chat to other mothers...instead of stuck in the house...' (p3) & CRA1 (p1) & (p3) & NRA1 '...my husband had gone back to work. People had kinda stopped..the novelty of a new baby wore off so I needed to get her and me into some sort of routine and get out of the house so we ...went to everything going...' (p2) & '...I...messed the Sure Start after and was like 'Listen would you mind giving her my mobile number, I want to keep in contact with her' and me and her would still meet up for lunch and she would come to mine and I would go to hers so it was a nice way to meet new friends...' (p3) & '...I want to get myself out of the house to make sure I don't...get depressed...' (p14)

PPG1 X.2 – Driver 1: socialisation – not always effective for all SUs: NRA1: '...her daughter-in-law is from Thailand...she went to that once and she never went back because she tried talking to other parents..she was asking them questions about their kids and they weren't really interacting back with her...' (p3/4)

PPG1 X.2 – Driver 1: socialisation – mixture of classes for parents and children and parent-only – NRA1: '...I've done a mixture of both which has been really good because you don't have time when the classes are centred on the kids, you don't get to interact an awful lot with parents...so it was nice to get those other classes...' (p3)